



**SAFFI Responding to Gender-based Violence in a South African Context: Documenting the History, Theory, Methods and Training Model (2008-2017)**

**By Elizabeth Petersen**

**2017**

A study commissioned by the South African Faith and Family Institute (SAFFI) in collaboration with the Joint Gender Fund (JGF)

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We extend a special thanks to Ms Megan Robertson, who as SAFFI's Research Assistant for her assistance with this project. 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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**List of Acronyms**

CABSA	Christian AIDS Bureau of Southern Africa
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CTII	Cape Town Interfaith Initiative
DLTLF	Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation
DSD	Department of Social Development
DV	Domestic violence
FHR	Foundation for Human Rights
FTI	Faith Trust Institute
GBV	Gender-Based violence
IPA	Intimate Partner Abuse
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex +
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
RLs	Religious leaders
SAFFI	South African Faith and Family Institute

TACGBV Theological Advisory Council on Gender-Based Violence  
USA United States of America  
UWC University of the Western Cape  
WCRLF Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum

## 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. GBV is a recognised violation of basic human rights<sup>1</sup>. GBV may be directed at women, girls, men, boys and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual and intersex (LGBTI+) communities. Violence against women in particular is a serious problem as horrific stories of intimate partner violence (IPV) have become an everyday occurrence.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the majority of affected individuals are women (and by extension their children) because of the unequal distribution of power and resources in society:

[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 society<sup>3</sup>

Add to gender disparity the issue of deprivation based on race. Patel argues that South Africa is ethnically diverse and the inequality in the effectiveness of individuals' demand for goods is a common feature of South African society. This he says, is in part because of years of racial segregation and oppression in which the majority of government welfare spending went to a small, white minority<sup>4</sup>. In post-apartheid South Africa, large sections of the population remain in poverty – particularly women rural women. In the words of Graca Machel<sup>5</sup>: "Eighteen years of freedom is not enough time to reverse the serious psychological and emotional damage done to the South African society. Families have been torn apart for at least three generations. Many people had grown up in torn and dysfunctional families...they carry with them this emotional mutilation". Machel then called for a "30 year national plan to help restore society. This should involve men, women, the youth and religious institutions backed by academic research"<sup>6</sup>

DV is a multi-dimensional problem which requires responses from all spheres of society.<sup>7</sup> More than 90% of the South African population ascribe to some form of religious practice many of whom belong to a particular faith tradition.<sup>8</sup> Thus it stands to reason that intervention strategies should include responses that include faith dimensions – including theological dilemmas, easily misinterpreted scriptures and religious teachings and its impact on the human dignity of

<sup>1</sup> E. G. Krug et al., Eds., World Report on Violence and Health (WHO, Geneva, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.marieclaire.co.za/hot-topics/new-study-on-violence-against-women-south-africa>

<sup>3</sup> Bloom, S 2008, *Violence against Women: A compendium of monitoring and evaluation indicators*, Chapel Hill: Measure Evaluation, p.14.

<sup>4</sup> cited online in In On Africa, 3 April 2013, The South African non-profit sector: Struggling to survive, needing to thrive.

<sup>5</sup> Guest speaker at the 2011 Desmond Tutu International Peace Lecture at the University of the Western Cape.

<sup>6</sup> SAFFI 2011-2012 Annual Report p.5

<sup>7</sup> South Africa boasts an active civil society with 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 NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) collectively as non-profit organizations (Jankelowitz, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182015.pdf>, p28.

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victims, survivors, perpetrators and their families. Elizabeth Petersen recognised this gap and, through her academic research and rigorous consultation with various stakeholders while working within both the GBV and religious sectors, founded ~~SAFFI (the~~ South African Faith and Family Institute (SAFFI).<sup>9</sup> It became evident that while the “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<sup>10</sup>.

A significant gap exists in literature around the experiences of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), practitioners and religious leaders (RLs) working at grassroots in the fields of GBV. Almost a decade after its inception in 2008, SAFFI sought to document its work and so add value to, and increase the knowledge-base of organizations working in the field of GBV, DV, IPV, etc.<sup>11</sup> With technical support, guidance and financial support from the *Joint Gender Fund*, SAFFI has produced this research report, the primary aim of which is to document the history, theory and methods of SAFFI from 2008 until 2017.

The research report discusses SAFFI’s understandings of working towards addressing some of the root causes of GBV.<sup>12</sup> SAFFI’s approach is informed by the African philosophical concept *ubuntu*<sup>13</sup> as well as the life-affirming role that faith plays in relationships – fully aware of the patriarchal tenets inherent in both these resources. The report also outlines the strategies SAFFI has employed to establish itself as a credible organisation facilitating the interface between the faith sector and other sectors dealing with GBV. It highlights the critical role faith and religion play in discourses on gender justice and violence against women. The research could serve as a source from which to reflect on the practicalities and challenges of addressing GBV at grassroots. While it is a narrative institutional memory but has the potential to inform GBV interventions in South African contexts.

## II. Founding of SAFFI

~~The South African Faith and Family Institute (SAFFI)~~SAFFI was founded by Elizabeth Petersen, a qualified social worker. Motivated by her work as director of a home for abused

<sup>9</sup> Petersen, E 2006, *Challenges experienced by clergy in dealing with domestic violence*, Master’s Dissertation, University of Western Cape, Cape Town; Petersen, E 2010, *Coloured women’s experiences of domestic violence in post-apartheid South*

Africa, available at: <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/DV-in-Post-Apartheid-South-Africa.pdf>, 30 September 2016; Petersen, E 2016, *Working with religious leaders and faith communities to advance culturally informed strategies to address violence against women*, *Agenda*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 50-59; Petersen, Elizabeth 2006; 2010; 2016; Also see <https://www.saffi.org.za/images/launch/downloads/saffi-launch-brochure.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Pillay, M 2016, *Theological Reflections on Root Causes of Abuse of Women in Intimate Relationships – A Resource for Faith Leaders*. A Joint Publication by SAFFI and UWC, pp.20.

<sup>11</sup> SAFFI uses terms such as GBV, DV, violence against women (VAW) and intimate partner abuse (IPA) interchangeably within the context of its work.

<sup>12</sup> SAFFI understands white supremacy and patriarchy, which it has termed the ‘Siamese twins of oppression’, to be the root causes of GBV.

<sup>13</sup> Defined in a diversity of ways *ubuntu* is commonly understood through the isiXhosa proverb, “*Ubuntu ungamuntu ngabanye abantu*”, which basically means that ‘a person is a person through other people’. Desmond Tutu is the main modern proponent of *ubuntu* philosophy.

women in Cape Town (1997-2008) she pursued a Master's Degree which was a study on the challenges experienced by clergy within the Anglican Church in Southern Africa in dealing with domestic violence.<sup>14</sup> –This research illuminated the need for training clergy in understanding and addressing the root causes and effects of DV and GBV. Petersen subsequently also discovered that there were no organisations in South Africa working specifically with RLs and faith communities around the faith dimensions and root causes of DV and Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA). SAFFI was then established with the intension of working within both, intra- and inter-faith contexts;<sup>15</sup> the vision to work within specific gender groups and across different gender identities (including the LGBTI+ communities); to foster a whole-community response to GBV interventions.

On 22 November 2005, an initial workshop was held with a group of fifty religious leaders (RL) from ~~the~~ different faith communities in partnership with the Cape Town Interfaith Initiative (CTII) and the Office of the Premier, Western Cape Provincial Government in Rondebosch, Cape Town. SAFFI used training materials developed by the FaithTrust Institute (FTI)<sup>16</sup> in this workshop. The overwhelming response from the RLs in attendance confirmed the need for training in this sector. This need was again articulated at the *Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking Interfaith Dialogue* sponsored by the United Nations in Cape Town in October 2007.<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Petersen was a facilitator at this meeting where, approximately three hundred multi-faith RLs from around the world acknowledged that they had an important role to play in preventing and combating GBV. The need for education and training on GBV issues was again reiterated. –Subsequent to this, various other conversations and workshops confirmed Petersen's research findings: 1) RLs and faith communities were important stakeholders in addressing GBV and DV; 2) RLs were not equipped or supported to respond adequately to GBV and DV; 3) Not any of the organisations dealing with GBV and/ or DV were addressing it from a faith aspect.

The above is a brief background to the establishment of SAFFI, registered as a non-governmental organization (NGO) focusing on intervening in the nexus between restorative gender justice (specifically GBV) and the faith sector. An inter-sectoral advisory board<sup>18</sup> was called into being which provided the new NGO and its founder with support and guidance in navigating the religious and GBV sectors. This board also supported Petersen in her decision to accept the Hubert H Humphrey Fellowship which involved attending a year-long course for mid-career professionals at the University of Minnesota in the United States of America. This sabbatical year became an integral phase in SAFFI's history. It allowed time for Petersen to

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<sup>14</sup> Petersen, E 2006, *Challenges experienced by clergy in dealing with domestic violence*, Master's Dissertation, University of Western Cape, Cape Town.

<sup>15</sup> Intra-faith meaning the different denominations or sects within a particular faith tradition and inter-faith meaning to work across the different faith traditions.

<sup>16</sup> An international organization situated in Seattle in the United States of America (USA), that religious leaders to respond to GBV.

<sup>17</sup> See, <http://www.gov.za/e-pahad-global-initiative-counter-human-trafficking-international-forum>

<sup>18</sup> Founding advisory board: Lungiswa Mamela (Western Cape Network on Violence against Women), Venessa Padayachee (Nicro), Rev. John Oliver (Anglican priest and CTII), Dr. Temba Masisela (HSRC), Pritima Osman (Justice Department Magistrate), and Dr. Marcel Londt (Expert on domestic and sexual violence perpetrator work).

practice self-care; to refine and reflect on the organisation's intention; and for important supportive international relationships to be developed. It was also an opportunity to engage with the FTI, which has a long history of training RLs to respond to abuse in the United States of America<sup>19</sup>, whose education and training materials had already influenced the training workshops held by Petersen. Petersen was able to establish an official partnership with the FTI and gain their endorsement for SAFFI to use their materials. Furthermore, it was agreed that SAFFI would become the reference point for other initiatives in Africa interested in pursuing the type of work done by the FTI and SAFFI.

For the first two years after establishment, SAFFI worked hard in creating a consciousness around the need to engage faith communities on gender issues. The Organisation also established key networks, local partnerships and built relationships with RLs from various faith traditions in South Africa who could shape and buy-in to the work of SAFFI.

In 2010 SAFFI held its official launch at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). -The Department of Religion and Theology at UWC co-hosted the event. -SAFFI used this platform to again announce and explain their work with faith communities across different religions and denominations; fostering a whole-community approach through engaging different sectors including government, HIV & AIDS, ~~the~~-LGBTI+ people, GBV including interventions with perpetrators of IPA sectors. The presence of Rev Dr Marie Fortune, the founder of the FTI was a particular honour for SAFFI.<sup>20</sup> Other purposefully invited guests were patrons: Archbishop Thabo Makgoba because of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa's activism during the anti-apartheid struggle and the prominent leadership role it provided in helping to articulate a vision of unity in diversity, healing, truth and reconciliation for the country. The Anglican Church in Southern Africa also publically presented itself as an inclusive faith institution that worked within a multi-faith and interreligious context which aligned with the location of SAFFI's work; Imam Dr Rashied Omar, from the Claremont Mosque, -because of his rich theological insight and influential grassroots presence in the South African society;and Rev Mpho Tutu-van Furth because of her family's legacy of fearless resolve in confronting the apartheid regime as well as addressing various forms of oppression, discrimination and injustices across the globe. Furthermore, the Tutu family through Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminded South Africans of our true essence which is embedded in the ancient African philosophy of *ubuntu* as we were transitioning from apartheid into a democracy.

The essence and ethos of SAFFI's work are shaped and guided by values of faith and family; respect and human dignity; compassion and *ubuntu*; collaboration and partnership; conversation and dialogue; and listening and learning. The complex nature of GBV embedded in the history of colonialism and apartheid and its combined dehumanizing impact on the lives of countless people in South Africa require responses that have much more facets to it than only conflict resolution. As such SAFFI draws insights from the concept of conflict

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<sup>19</sup> See, <http://www.faitrustinstitute.org>.

<sup>20</sup> FTI was established in 1977 with a particular focus on enrolling RLs and faith communities in the quest to prevent and interrupt VAW.



transformation as it seeks to contribute to restoring the innate human dignity of all individuals and institutions involved in the web of GBV in intimate relationships, homes and communities.

SAFFI has, since its inception, been helping to facilitate a coordinated restorative justice response to GBV / IPA where both secular and religious professionals can share knowledge, experiences and concerns relating to GBV. SAFFI offers multi-cultural, inter-sectoral, interfaith and intra-faith domestic violence training and dialogue opportunities – in supporting faith professionals to recognise and use the positive resources from within their particular faith traditions, and possibly learn from the faith traditions of others. These are aimed at preventing, mitigating -against, and eradicating GBV in general and violence against women in particular. RLs and faith communities are supported in developing sound policies and intervention strategies from within their own faith traditions. Awareness raising and self-reflection conversations lead to recognizing oppressing beliefs and practices. In its aim to ~~forster~~foster whole-community responses, SAFFI engages secular professionals (i.e. the GBV sector, social services, health, legislators, academics, judiciary, police, and correctional services) and encourages them to acknowledge and be sensitive to the role faith plays in the lives of victims and perpetrators.

### III. Leadership Approach

The establishment of SAFFI, like many other organizations, was the result of the vision of a particular person. In SAFFI's case it was the vision of social worker, Elizabeth Petersen. Later, Petersen's vision for SAFFI became a shared vision through her participatory leadership style. Her leadership approach was, to a great extent, influenced and nuanced during the time Petersen spent at the Hubert H Humphrey Fellowship Programme (Minnesota, USA) in 2008-2009. It was a time of retreat, reflection and refinement of SAFFI's mission, strategy and leadership approach. This was an important learning opportunity as SAFFI was in the process of establishing itself in a context where there was tension between the faith sector and GBV sector about the influence and impact the other had on the interventions with people affected by GBV, DV VAW and IPA. SAFFI presented a case for collaboration between these and other sectors who respond to GBV. -GBV in all its facets, is a multi-faceted phenomenon and requires a multi-dimensional approach. Thus SAFFI became a proponent of whole-community responses to GBV that included holistic and culturally competent GBV intervention strategies. SAFFI was also advocating for these well-placed and influential sectors to consider its common mission of affirming the human dignity of women and individuals who are vulnerable to and afflicted by GBV. The following section focuses briefly on the leadership narratives which Petersen envisaged for SAFFI.-

-In particular, the *Leadership for Common Good*<sup>21</sup> session taken by Elizabeth while on the Hubert H Humphrey Fellowship Programme had an influence on the initial thinking about how the newly established SAFFI would go about as an institution that would embody and promote leadership for change. Influenced by this time of learning, reflection and discernment, it became clear that SAFFI was to be an organisation which would ignite and support the desire

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<sup>21</sup> Based on the work Crosby & Bryson (2005).

of others (particularly faith leaders and other influential cultural leaders across diverse sectors of society) to further gender justice work in South Africa. Kouzes and Posner<sup>22</sup> write that the more people are permitted to express and to explore, the sooner they will discover their common values and common vision. Therefore, through SAFFI's efforts to bring together influential religious, secular leaders and experts from various relevant professional fields and the broader community in truthful conversation, the Organisation seeks to contribute to shaping a coordinated, whole-community response to addressing GBV.

By pursuing a holistic, co-ordinated, culturally informed response from the onset SAFFI was seeking to reform and transform the DV responses in South Africa. Crosby and Bryson<sup>23</sup> emphasize that major reform or revolution require a whole new way of thinking and dramatic change in social, political, economic, or technological systems. They assert that leaders who are concerned about revolution have to organize a social movement to carry it out. In order to make SAFFI's mission work, influential leaders from the DV sector, judiciary, academia, government, correctional services and religious sector were recruited to serve on the SAFFI board and were invited to participate in the initial and conceptual stages of the development of the organization. Each of these purposefully selected individuals worked with the mission and vision of SAFFI as they acted as catalysts in their own sectors to propagate this new movement to mobilize RLs. Jeffrey Luke<sup>24</sup> explains that in order to address interconnected public problems effectively, public leadership requires individuals to act as catalysts. He then goes on explaining that catalysts convene and join with a diverse group of individuals, forging sustainable agreements, setting into motion multiple strategies, and sustaining momentum over time.

The idea of changing the dominant narrative which primarily insists that abused women leave abusive relationships if they want to be safe, is revolutionary. The fact that the faith sector was regarded as problematic when dealing with GBV in intimate ~~relationships,relationships~~ was a particular leadership challenge for SAFFI. However, the substantial influence Elizabeth Petersen had gained in the religious sector as well as in the ~~domestic violence~~DV sector over the 15 years prior to the establishing SAFFI assisted in furthering the organization's leadership intention to create a respectful space where each profession/sector could be honoured for the unique contribution they bring to humanity and the and advancement of the common good. A shared vision to work towards a desired outcome of peace and respect in intimate relationships and families where each individual would be able to live their full potential was not impossible. The idea was that the different professions, institutions and sectors would create a web of diverse inputs and so shape whole-community responses to GBV.

SAFFI leans towards Lederach's notion of conflict transformation that holds the idea that relationships have visible as well as invisible dimensions, and that conflict provides

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<sup>22</sup> Kouzes, J & Posner, B 2002, The leadership challenge, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, pp.xviii.

<sup>23</sup> Crosby, B & Bryson, J 2005, pp. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Luke, J 1997, Catalytic leadership: Strategies for an interconnected world, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, p.218.

opportunity to stop, reflect and change-<sup>25</sup>. In Petersen's years of working with women who have experienced IPA, most abused women have consistently requested intervention with the abusive partners who at times may be the father of their children<sup>26</sup>. This observation points to the reality that even in instances where the relationship has ended because of abuse; there might be ongoing contact between the woman and the abusive partner because of the children. As such, women who are involved in these situations often have to find ways to negotiate around how the conflict has to be transformed for the children to have a relationship with their father and what this would mean for her own safety and need to live her potential.

According to Crosby and Bryson series of reforms guided by revolutionary thinking can eventually add up to revolution:<sup>27</sup> -It is indeed the ultimate intention of the work of SAFFI that safety options for women be expanded and that interventions with abusive men would take into account women's safety and liberation. Legislation and other interventions must be culturally informed and take into account the deep legacy of apartheid and profoundly devastating impact it had on the African person and family. The post-apartheid South Africa requires leaders who would be willing to recognize their own need for mind-set shifts and for their interventions to be informed and guided by the people whom they seek to serve. Crosby and Bryson make the point that leaders, like SAFFI, who are seeking change, should also seek insights from history, trends analysis, personal experience and cultural anthropology. It was therefore important for SAFFI to acquaint itself with work that has been done in the sector through research, consultations with experts as well as program visits and where possible securing partnership relationships with selected experts to offer technical support and mentorship. It is also important then that SAFFI looks inward and engages in self-reflective learning processes, such as is encompassed in this report. As a leader fully in-touch with one's context, Crosby and Bryson<sup>28</sup> suggest that leaders become students of history, analyse trends and get involved in the debates that surround them, in an important part of civil society, politics, the economy, or technology. Thus, based on insights gained, Elizabeth Petersen navigated a leadership style that was personal, integrative, visionary, participatory and organizational to bring a unique contribution through SAFFI to the GBV sector in South Africa.

#### **4.1.IV. The context, multi-layered nature and extent of gender-based violence against women**

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The multi-dimensional nature of gender-based violence (GBV) and the oppression of women inherent in patriarchal religions and cultural practices must be considered to more fully understand the complex dynamics involved in exploring responses. South African women live in one of the most religious societies, with at least 90% of the population subscribing to religious practice<sup>29</sup>, yet it is one of the most violent societies in the world. Research estimates

<sup>25</sup> Lederach, J 2003, *The little book of conflict transformation: Clear Articulation of the guiding principles by a pioneer in the field*, Good Books, Intercourse, US.

<sup>26</sup> Petersen, E 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Crosby, B & Bryson, J 2005, pp. 42.

<sup>28</sup> Crosby, B & Bryson, J 2005, pp. 46.

<sup>29</sup> WIN/Gallup international 2015, *Losing our religion? Two thirds of people still claim to be religious*, 13th April 2015.

indicate that one in four women finds herself in an abusive relationship<sup>30</sup> and that every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner<sup>31</sup>.

Whilst feminism has recognised patriarchy as a central source of oppression and violation of women, Nompumelelo Motlafi<sup>32</sup>, referring to African women on the continent and of the diaspora (in other parts of the globe) argues that the international human rights discourse originated in the context of ethnocentric European endeavours aimed at achieving consensus-based nation building. In this context, she writes that human rights were regarded as entitlements allocated to rational individual human agents – namely white European males. White women were regarded as imperfect humans lacking rationality, and “the basic humanity of all non-Europeans was totally rejected”. Motlafi further posits that: the earliest protests of black South African women were as much about women asserting their rights to make a living in the urban areas as they were about fighting to protect the integrity of the black family<sup>33</sup>.

The large majority of black and other women of colour in South Africa continue to live in dire socio-economic deprivation which is deeply rooted in the colonial and apartheid legacies. In as much as faith is a source of hope and affirmation, it compounds the personal and public human crisis of GBV because for centuries sacred texts and religious teachings have been used to justify the oppression and violation of women and black people. It is also maintained that the domination of, and violence toward women are ingrained in the tradition of family relationships in South Africa<sup>34</sup>.

“Feminism recognises patriarchy as a system of oppressive power that through its institutionalisation masquerades as being beneficial to the oppressed. It is a system that has throughout the ages been posited as a God-ordained holy hierarchy – sanctified by certain bible passages”<sup>35</sup>. Religion must therefore receive particular attention in any dialogue about the role and impact of domestic violence in the lives of women<sup>36</sup>. Whilst the aftermath of the institutionalised colonial and apartheid systems are often acknowledged as contributing factors towards the violent nature of the South African society, funding resources are usually geared to help women leave abusive relationships. Passing reference only is made to the deep complex root causes and exacerbating socio-economic conditions which keep women trapped and

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30 Jewkes R & Abrahams N 2002, The epidemiology of rape and sexual coercion in South Africa: an overview, *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 55, no. 7, pp. 1231-1244.

31 Mathews S, Abrahams N, Martin L, Vetten L, Van Der Merve L & Jewkes R 2004, Every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner: A national study of female homicide in South Africa, South African Medical Research Council, South Africa.

32 Motlafi, N 2015, Why black women in South Africa don't fully embrace the feminist discourse, *Male & Guardian*, available at: <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-08-07-why-black-women-in-south-africa-dont-fully-emb-race-the-feminist-discourse>, site accessed 29 September 2016.

33 Motlafi, N 2015.

34 Emmett, M 2000, The other voices: Women exploring the sacred spaces, A project of the World Conference on Religion and Peace South Africa (WCRPSA), Video, Yeoville, WCRPSA, Johannesburg, South Africa.

35 Pillay, M 2013, The Anglican Church and feminism: Challenging 'the patriarchy of faith', *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*, vol. 19, no.2, pp. 64.

36 Bell, C & Mattis J 2000, The importance of cultural competence in ministering to African American victims of domestic violence, *Violence Against Women*, vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 515-532.

perpetrators unaccountable and outside of receiving help<sup>37</sup>. Despite some accomplishments in service provision (including counselling) for victims of IPA, public education and domestic violence legislation, the problem in South Africa appears to be escalating and deepening in brutality<sup>38</sup>. Shelters advocating for abused women complain that the fragmented nature of services actually leave abused women at higher risk and more vulnerable to abuse. It is the lack of holistic and integrated approaches to interventions that often results in women who leave shelters returning to their abusive partners, and further ostracisation by hostile families and communities. SAFFI therefore concurs with Motlafi who writes that in the current dispensation in South Africa, black women's negotiation of their human rights and dignity continues to be a balancing act between personal needs and broader family and community needs<sup>39</sup>.

Cape Town, South Africa in 1993 was a moment of great expectation as South Africa was transitioning to democracy from colonialism and apartheid, Petersen herself experienced marginalisation during deliberations on the crafting of what became the Family Violence Prevention Act and later the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998. The agenda being vigorously pursued was about the empowerment and liberation of women, but the voices of black and other women of colour – especially those who did not define themselves as feminists pitted against men and religion were treated with disdain. These legislative processes were predominantly led by white feminists who largely insisted on what became known as a one-size-fits-all approach to IPA and GBV intervention. The aftermath of this progressive, yet in many ways ineffective legislative tool, is that for a large majority of women for whom leaving is not an option or a choice – access to safety remains out of reach. Also quite unsettling was that soon after liberation in 1994, many of the white feminist activists disappeared from the scene as black women took up leadership positions in the struggle to end GBV. Recognition of the interconnectedness of race, faith, cultural practice and patriarchy was a reality for most abused women; yet it remained a critical gap as far as intervention strategies are concerned.

In response to the #FeesMustFall (in South Africa) and the #BlackLivesMatter (in the United States of America) uprisings, Petersen noted<sup>40</sup> that humanity (more especially leaders of institutions) is called upon to become serious about dismantling what she refers to as 'the Siamese twins of oppression': namely, white supremacy and patriarchy. Black people and women continue to be at the receiving end of oppression; and many are co-opted and lured into sustaining these systems by being offered special privileges and a false sense of supremacy. These systems of white and male privilege continue to use institutions such as intimate relationships, families, religion, schools/education, business, politics, law/ legislation to perpetuate dehumanising practices.

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<sup>37</sup> Petersen, E 2010, *Coloured women's experiences of domestic violence in post-apartheid South Africa*, available at: <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/DV-in-Post-Apartheid-South-Africa.pdf>, 30 September 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Padayachee, V & Petersen, E 2010, *Re-thinking domestic violence intervention in a post-apartheid South Africa: Towards a multi-sectoral national strategy*, unpublished article based on a meeting with the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee: Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities, February 24, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Motlafi, N 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Petersen, E 2015, *Initiatives inspiring the quest to dismantle oppression*, Cape Times, 26 October 2015, pp. 9.

In SAFFI's research, it has been found that countless women of faith who are victims in abusive intimate relationships are yearning for more comprehensive responses to their personal crises. These women, who locate their identity within their religious faith, often face the dilemma of having to leave their faith community if they walk out of an abusive situation. Theological struggles relating to gender roles within the family continue to be central for victims and survivors. In instances where some women have decided to leave abusive relationships, they have found that their faith communities have difficulty in supporting them for different reasons. They are worried about the implications of reaching out to secular counsellors as this is frequently discouraged in faith communities. In many cases, interventions from their faith communities have not been helpful, as confirmed in various research studies<sup>41</sup>. These scholars confirm that most victims are likely to use religious coping strategies and are more likely to seek help from a minister than from any other helping professional. Yet a South African study with Christian clergy confirmed that they are not equipped to deal with issues of IPA. The tendency is to encourage victims to extend themselves further by praying more and becoming more supportive of their male partners who have the God-given responsibility of being head of the home<sup>42</sup>.

Almost 40 years ago, Walker<sup>43</sup> called it a "myth" that religious beliefs would prevent GBV. The majority of women interviewed by Walker<sup>44</sup> grew up in what she calls "religious" homes and she found that their beliefs and values primarily served to maintain the family unit. While most of the women in her study reported religious beliefs and some felt that their belief in a deity "helped them endure their suffering, offering comfort and solace"<sup>45</sup>, others abandoned their faith because it created conflict with the abuser or because of being unsuccessful in seeking help from religious or spiritual leaders.

The construct of masculinity has long been studied in relation to IPA and religion. Studies often focus on the patriarchal cultural beliefs that create the conditions in which men expect to dominate their partners and control the family's resources<sup>46</sup>. Religious beliefs that exemplify this stance include those that place the husband as the head of the household with the primary decisional power and wives as the primary caretakers of children; that limit their vocational or economic prospects, or charge them with submission to their husbands<sup>47</sup>. Feminist theorists<sup>48</sup> have cited these teachings as contributing factors to DV, believing that the assignation of

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<sup>41</sup> Rotunda, R, Williamson, G & Penfold, M 2004, Clergy response to domestic violence: A preliminary survey of clergy members, victims and batterers, *Pastoral Psychology*, vol. 52, pp. 353-365; Bell, C & Mattis, J 2000; Grady, J 2000, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women: How the Bible has been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage*, Charisma House, USA; Walker, L 1979, *The Battered Woman*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York.

<sup>42</sup> Petersen, E 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Walker, L 1979, pp.2.

<sup>44</sup> Walker, L 1979.

<sup>45</sup> Walker, L 1979, pp.2.

<sup>46</sup> For example Dobash R & Dobash R 1979, *Violence against wives: A case against the patriarchy*, The Free Press, New York.

<sup>47</sup> Nason-Clark, N 2004, When terror strikes at home: The interface between religion and domestic violence, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 303-319; Fortune, M 1983, *Sexual violence: The unmentionable sin*, The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio.

<sup>48</sup> For example Walker L, 1979.

disproportionate power within the relationship can lead to the abuse of that power. Many feminist DV professionals<sup>49</sup> blame religion for aggravating the problem while many faith leaders and religious communities believe that secular interventions alienate help-seekers from their faith. It can be said that both these critical sectors have been at odds with each other, lacking awareness of the resources that each potentially contributes to bringing hope, healing and transformation to individuals and families affected by the devastation of gender-based intimate partner abuse.

#### **4.2.V. South African Faith and Family Institute's vision for a restorative justice response**

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The establishment of SAFFI in 2008 and its official launch in 2010, was informed by the quest to expand more safe options for abused women; accountability of perpetrators; create a coordinated, culturally informed restorative justice response to GBV. The central idea being that religious leaders and the faith sector could add value to GBV interventions in collaboration with government departments and the GBV sectors.

As the founder of SAFFI, Petersen brought more than 20 years of experience in working with abused women, seven years of working with male perpetrators of intimate partner abuse and more than 15 years' local and international research within the GBV field to the organisation. She has also drawn on her own experience as a woman of faith working with faith leaders within the Pentecostal Christian tradition and across different religions. Key staff in SAFFI bring experience within these broad contexts, as well as from various research traditions. Central to SAFFI's work is the advancement of the common good and the critical contribution that all stakeholders bring to this restorative justice outcome. SAFFI embraced the following five key principles (as offered by Crosby and Bryson, 2005) in its unfolding work towards creating a coordinated response to gender-based violence against women. These are: knowing your authentic self; orienting your moral compass; understanding your motivations; building your support team and; staying grounded by integrating all aspects of your life.

The overall objectives of SAFFI's approach to DV/IPA intervention are drawn from international best practice and include: safety of the woman and her children first; accountability for the perpetrator; restoration of individuals; and if possible, restoration of the relationship or mourning the loss of the relationship.

SAFFI's vision is to see women, men and children live their full potential in a society free from GBV where faith and justice are honoured. SAFFI's mission is to advance a coordinated, multi-sectoral, culturally competent restorative justice response to violence against women and children by:

- Being a resource to RLs, institutions and faith communities as they hold offenders accountable and ensure the safety and empowerment of victims/survivors by offering them an opportunity for truth telling and the healing of individuals and families;

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<sup>49</sup> Hunt, M 2014, Feminist faith-based social justice: How feminists of faith can collaborate to amplify our voices and deepen our collective impact, a plenary presentation delivered at the EEWC Christian Feminism Today Gathering on June 27, 2014; Petersen E, 2006.

- Challenging, from a theological perspective, patriarchal traditions and other root causes of IPA and violence which destroy the dignity of women, children and men; and
- Encouraging the promotion of scriptural and theological teachings that encourage intimate relationships which allow people to live their full potential in supportive unions.

SAFFI targets RLs, faith communities and institutions (government and GBV service providers) who offer services and interventions to abused women, perpetrators and their families. Its programmes seek to deepen RLs' understanding of the faith dimensions and root causes of GBV against women. In each encounter there is the promise of an opportunity for expanding insights on GBV, safety and support services offered to women; as well as accountability and personal restorative justice for abusive men. SAFFI has an interfaith as well as an intra-faith focus and engages religious leaders and faith communities within the African Traditional Religion, Baha'i, Christian, Hindu, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and the Brahma Kumaris faiths.

SAFFI also facilitates dialogues and 'sacred conversations' between the LGBTI+ community and faith sectors to reflect on challenges and opportunities for collaboration and partnership in the quest to eradicate sexual violence and same-sex discrimination. Rather than focusing on the diverse views and theological complexities pertaining to same-sex intimate relationships, SAFFI advocates for intimate relationships, which set people free to live their full potential in supportive unions, while refraining from offering directives. SAFFI is particularly concerned that the rapes and killings of lesbians are often dealt with by LGBTI+ service providers exclusively. The SAFFI dialogues have expanded the consciousness of violence against lesbians as GBV against women [for RLs and faith communities](#). This resulted in conversations between women leaders from the DV/VAW sector who have traditionally not focused their efforts on women who experienced similar violence, abuse and oppression from within the LGBTI+ community. SAFFI also organized pilgrimages on Robben Island which brought together women from diverse backgrounds including women living on farms, abused women living in shelters, women from the LGBTI+ community and women from different religions and denominations to reflect on the common experiences of navigating through various forms of violence, abuse and oppression to access safety, sanity and liberation. These pilgrimages served as powerful encounters which defused historical barriers and cemented new connections of support across the diversities among women who participated.

#### **IV.VI. SAFFI's Theory of Change and the Impact of *Ubuntu***

SAFFI's work is located in a number of theoretical frameworks. They include but are not limited to the African philosophy of *ubuntu*, Conflict Transformation, and the Family Resilience and Ecology of Human Development theory. The *ubuntu* philosophy makes a significant contribution to the application of the theory of Family Resilience and Ecology of Human Development. *ubuntu* correctly proposes that we are truly human only in community



with other persons<sup>50</sup>. GBV has a profound impact on the life of the individual, the family and the whole of society. Through cultivating the spirit of *ubuntu* SAFFI is able to address the complex faith dimensions of GBV in intimate relationships and families. Family Resilience and Ecology of Human Development theory provides one of the frameworks for SAFFI's interventions. Walsh<sup>51</sup> explains that resilience can generally be defined as the ability to 'bounce back' to healthy functioning when faced with significant stressors and events. This is particularly true for families where GBV is present. The term family resilience is applied within this theory on the basis that the healthy family is a myth: conflict and change are therefore normal issues and expected. Aspects of family resilience that lead to successful adaptation and the ability to deal with a significant stressor or adversity include family cohesion, belief systems, coping strategies and communication.

SAFFI also finds that Lederach's notion of Conflict Transformation informs its theoretical approach. By definition:

*Conflict transformation is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships*

Lederach further explains that a transformational view subscribes to the opinion that dialogue is necessary for both creating and addressing social and public spheres where human institutions, structures and patterns of relationships are constructed. Here processes and spaces must be created so that people can engage and shape the structures that order their community life. At its heart, conflict transformation focuses on creating adaptive responses to human conflict through change processes which increase justice and reduce violence. Transformation seeks to help those in conflict to understand the cultural patterns that contribute to conflict in their setting, and then to identify, promote, and build on the resources and mechanisms within that culture for constructively responding to and handling conflict. As an analytical framework, transformation seeks to understand social conflict as it emerges from and produces changes in the personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions of human experience. As an intervening strategy, transformation works to promote constructive processes with the following range of change-oriented goals.

- The personal change goal in conflict transformation is to minimize destructive effects of social conflict and maximize the potential for growth and well-being in the person as an individual human being at physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual levels.
- The Relational change goal in conflict transformation is to minimize poorly functioning communication and maximize understanding.
- The Structural change goal in conflict transformation is about understanding and addressing root causes and social conditions that give rise to violent and other harmful

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<sup>50</sup> Lutz, D 2009, African *ubuntu* philosophy and global management, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 84, no.3, pp. 313.

<sup>51</sup> Walsh, F 2012, *Normal Family Processes* (4th edition), Guilford Press, New York.

expressions of conflict. It promotes nonviolent mechanisms that reduce adversarial confrontation and that minimize and ultimately eliminate violence. Structural change goal fosters the development of structures to meet basic human needs i.e. substantive justice and to maximize participation of people in decisions that affect their lives i.e. procedural justice.

- The Cultural change goal in conflict transformation is to identify and understand the cultural patterns that contribute to the rise of violent expressions of conflict; and then to identify and build upon resources and mechanisms within a cultural setting for constructively responding to and handling conflict<sup>52</sup>.

During the transition from a violent colonial apartheid to democracy, it was Archbishop Desmond Tutu who reminded South Africans (and the world) about the ancient African way of life and philosophy of *ubuntu*. He describes *ubuntu* as the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that one person's humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in that of another. I am human because I belong. *Ubuntu* speaks about wholeness; it speaks about compassion. Persons with *ubuntu* know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of *ubuntu* gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanise them.

The unity that *ubuntu* advocates for is about support for the dignity of human life<sup>53</sup>. The work of SAFFI is about cultivating *ubuntu* as it invites RLs to dig deep for resources from within their own sacred texts and faith traditions in the quest of bringing lasting healing to victims/survivors, perpetrators, affected children and families.

#### 4.1.6.1. SAFFI's Hypothesis

If RLs are transformed in their thinking and/or knowledge about gender power relations, from hierarchical to relational, their teaching, preaching and pastoral care intervention will transform the way women and men relate to one another in intimate relationships, family life and broader society. The practice of *ubuntu* can serve as a catalyst for such transformation.

### V-VII. SAFFI's Strategies

The complexity of addressing GBV in intimate relationships in the deeply troubled socio-political and socio-economic context of South Africa is enormous. South African activists from different race, class and ideological or theological positions have realised that a key challenge remains negotiating how and when contradictions are confronted. In a multicultural and multi-sectoral collaboration the possibilities are endless in terms of peace-building. Lederach<sup>54</sup> reminds that in conflicts where there has been a long history of patterns and episodes that were not constructively addressed – like with GBV in post-apartheid South Africa – people feel

• <sup>52</sup> Lederach 2003:14, 22, 26 & 27

<sup>53</sup> Chuwa, L 2014, *African indigenous ethics in global bioethics, Advancing Global Bioethics*, Vol 1, Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media.

<sup>54</sup> Lederach, JP 2003:54.

overwhelmed by the complexity of it all. People/stakeholders react or respond differently to complexity. He reiterates that one of the great advantages of complexity is that it provides endless possibilities and that change is not tied to one thing, one action or one option. If stakeholders pay careful attention to the various options, insights and wisdoms that each bring to the complex situation, new ways of looking at old patterns can emerge.

Miranda Pillay, the Western Cape Chapter Convener of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, asserts that the historical nature of GBV confirms that:

*...it is entrenched in culture and religion and reinforced, powered and maintained by patriarchy. Patriarchy is referred to as male rule, male headship and androcentrism (i.e. a male-centred perspective on relationships and lived-reality) and entrenched in the structures of society and the church as well as in the inner consciousness of both women and men. This explains why many women remain in abusive and violent relationships and why some women and men defend patriarchy<sup>55</sup>.*

Whilst some feminists see religion as irredeemably problematic, SAFFI leans towards the hopeful view of feminists who see religion as a “life-giving and life-sustaining intention and authority of scripture for all creation in terms of God’s dynamic, re-creative presence in ever-changing times and circumstances”<sup>56</sup>. Tackling this ambitious task required a range of strategies and services which directly speak to and respond to the gaps which SAFFI identified in the GBV sector in South Africa. These strategies included the facilitation of dialogues, roundtable discussions, sacred conversations, pilgrimages on Robben Island, walks of witnesses, sensitizer workshops and training and capacity strengthening initiatives. These activities involved various groupings of persons and stakeholders. SAFFI was intentional about bringing together specific groups of people for specific activities for example at times it was only RLs within an intra-faith or an interfaith setting, on other occasions gatherings included RLs, government department officials and GBV activists or service providers, on others it would be women of faith together with women from the GBV and LGBTI+ sectors; and again on other occasions SAFFI would gather men of faith to reflect on the faith dimensions and interconnected root causes of VAW in intimate relationships and society. The following section describes some of the strategies which SAFFI employed to establish itself in the South African GBV and faith sector landscape.

#### **2.1.7.1. Conversations, dialogues and workshops**

Dialogical discussions and workshops are facilitated in different formats and with different stakeholders with the aim of encouraging the sharing of insights and creation of new knowledge between practitioners, participants, academics and various organisations working in the gender and/or faith sectors.

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<sup>55</sup> Pillay, M 2013, pp. 55-56.

<sup>56</sup> Mouton 2011 cited in Pillay, 2013, pp.60.

Conversations, dialogues and workshops were aimed at mobilising and enrolling RLs and secular professionals into their critical role in addressing the faith dimensions of GBV / IPA and to encourage the building of intra-faith, interfaith and multi-sectoral networks. These moments with religious leaders from diverse faiths and other professionals invited participants to critically reflect on the ‘Siamese twins of oppression’ in the quest to address the faith dimensions and root causes of GBV against women in intimate relationships and society. SAFFI offers the *ubuntu* philosophy (which is present in all faiths) as the safety net in confronting the white supremacy and patriarchy that are operative in the systematic and systemic destruction of women, men, children and families.

Examples of this include initiatives such as the Sacred Conversations and Walks of Witness which SAFFI held in 2011 and 2012 around the issue of hate crimes and the killings of lesbians in the Cape Town surrounds. This entailed facilitating conversations amongst faith leaders on the topic and provided RLs with an opportunity to support each other as a collective. This initiative also involved having faith leaders visit with the victims/survivors and their families. This provided the opportunity for those affected to talk with the faith sector about issues pertaining to for example, same sex relations, violence against women, and to explore the challenges and opportunities which exist in bringing hope and healing to individuals and families who have been affected by GBV.

#### 2.2.7.2. Pilgrimages

In 2012 SAFFI, in partnership with the St George’s Cathedral Justice and Reconciliation Group organized two pilgrimages on Robben Island - one for women and another one for men. SAFFI was intentional about using these pilgrimages as a means to address the scars apartheid had left on South Africans as well as the GBV experiences of women. These pilgrimages were a journey of reflection which participants acknowledged to be different to the tours of Robben Island available to the public. Evaluations from the participants have clearly demonstrated such events help participants to become more empathetic with what both men and women went through during the time of apartheid. Many reported becoming more conscientious about their work and how they can assist to address the wounds caused by the South African past.

#### 2.3.7.3. Advocacy & Campaigns

This strategy ultimately aims at “getting the message out there” by drawing on SAFFI’s mission, research and learnings. SAFFI uses various platforms to inform and shape the conversations and campaigns advocating for a particular focus on amplifying the faith dimensions and root causes of GBV in intimate relationships and to recognize RLs and faith communities as key resources when addressing gender and women’s rights.

Advocacy work takes the form of creating public awareness on radio and television talk shows, presenting and hosting at conferences, and participating in national campaigns such as the 16 days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. Here follows several initiatives which involved localized, international as well as technological activities which help to spread the word:

- “*I Am Woman: Leap of Faith*”<sup>57</sup> was a 24-minute documentary about Elizabeth’s personal journey which contributed to the founding of SAFFI. It was part of a series in 2013 that featured women who have made a leap of faith that has ultimately had a positive impact on South African society. The *Take a Stand* campaign - a series of nine 30-second video and radio messages produced by SAFFI. It features faith leaders calling upon their counterparts and the country to ‘Take a Stand’ against IPA and GBV. The World Council of Churches and the Christian AIDS Bureau of Southern Africa (CABSA) showed the documentaries at the ‘We Will Speak Out’ campaign at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict: London 2014<sup>58</sup>.
- A *five-country webinar* on ‘Sexual Misconduct by Christian Leaders in Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches’ was held in 2011, in partnership with the FaithTrust Institute (FTI) where participants from United States of America (USA), South Africa, Norway, Australia and Canada shared their insights and understandings<sup>59</sup>. Another webinar in partnership with FTI focused on the role of religious leaders during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign in the USA and South Africa. Other platforms where SAFFI participated in international engagements included *The British High Commissioner’s* 2014 International Women’s Day initiative i.e. with a Panel Discussion on the role of Religious Leaders in the 21st Century for preventing GBV in South Africa. Not only was SAFFI a panellist, but we were a key stakeholder in mobilizing the multi-faith audience of senior religious leaders.
- During 2015, SAFFI’s work was acknowledged with an invitation to me to serve on the United Nations (UN) Women Civil Society Advisory Group of its Multi Country Office of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; as well as through SAFFI’s participation in the Heinrich Böell Stiftung Southern Africa’s Beijing Plus 20 in South Africa<sup>60</sup>.
- Also in 2015 SAFFI’s efforts to engage religious leaders and the faith sector in the quest to prevent, reduce and end VAW, was acknowledged at the Gender Links South Africa’s SADC Gender Protocol Summit where SAFFI received an award in the Best Practice Award in the Faith- based organisation category.

#### 2.4.7.4. Research

SAFFI provides qualitative evidence which supports the need for interventions to take place in a space which straddles the gender and faith sectors. This research also proves as a resource tool to further the agenda of those seeking to curb GBV. In 2016 SAFFI began a process of reporting, reflection and analysis (of which this report is a part) which will serve to contribute to the body of knowledge around topics including: gender reconciliation, GBV, and the nexus between gender and faith sectors.

<sup>57</sup> See [www.iamwomanseries.com](http://www.iamwomanseries.com)

<sup>58</sup> SAFFI Newsletter issue 1, July 2015

<sup>59</sup> See [www.faithtrustinstitute.org/training](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/training)

<sup>60</sup> See <http://za.boell.org/2015/06/13/beijing-plus-20-south-africa-reflections-status-women-south-africa-20-years-1995-beijing>

#### **2.5.7.5. Partnerships and collaborations**

One of SAFFI's core values is that of collaboration as without it the work of SAFFI would cease to be effective. Often there is an assumption in civil society that the aims and outputs of numerous organisations and initiatives addressing similar issues would automatically link up and thus create a forceful and holistic response to an issue. Unfortunately, this is often not the case and without conscious and deliberate interaction and partnership, work gets duplicated or interventions operate in parallel silos failing to create a compounded, more impactful and holistic response. Thus, SAFFI has formed numerous partnerships and collaborations over the years with those who share in the vision to free society of GBV.

Embedded in the philosophy of *ubuntu*, SAFFI advocates for the kind of partnerships that appreciate the unique purpose, mission, value and contribution that of each person/organization/sector bring to the whole for the common good.

Certain strategic partnerships have been essential for SAFFI. As a learning organisation, SAFFI greatly benefited from the partnership formed with the FTI in terms of the institutional memory they hold about working with RLs on domestic violence issues. With their extensive experience in working with the faith sector around issues of GBV, SAFFI gained a wealth of knowledge and resources from this partnership. The connection and collaboration with the African American community amplify and confirm the need for the culturally competent intentionality that SAFFI advocates for. The latter is becoming more evident as South African gender justice activists are becoming more aware of the urgency for de-colonizing the manner in which social problems are being dealt with in a post-apartheid context.

SAFFI's longstanding relationship with the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and particularly the Department of Religion and Theology has ensured that SAFFI's work is supported by rigorous academic research guidance and that it can contribute to the production of new knowledge and theoretically infused practice in wider fields<sup>61</sup>. Through this relationship, SAFFI, through Petersen, coordinated various colloquia which connected with renowned South African and African theologians. SAFFI was also able to assist in connecting the Department with the multi-faith and interreligious community.

SAFFI's partnership with the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation (DLTLF) was important in cementing understandings of *ubuntu* and values of peace and freedom from oppression. The Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum (WCRLF) in which SAFFI holds the seat for gender justice, is an integral partnership in terms of linking SAFFI with senior RLs and the various religious formations, denomination structures and forums.

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<sup>61</sup> Professor Christo Lombard, the former head of department, played a key role in helping to secure a meaningful partnership/relationship with the Department and the university.

#### **2.6.7.6. The Theological Advisory Council on Gender-based Violence (TACGBV)**

During 2014, as SAFFI faced major funding challenges and it became particularly challenging to spread the intra-faith work into other faith communities beyond the Christian faith, SAFFI established the TACGBV to ensure that the multi-faith aspect of its work gains prominence.

The TACGBV brings together theologians, scholars and religious leaders from diverse religions and denominations for the purpose of addressing easily misinterpreted scriptures, religious teachings and practices as it relates to GBV in intimate relationships, homes and communities. Members of the TACGBV are also purposefully selected with the aim of reaching a wide variety of denominations and religious traditions and specific attempts are made to secure both women and men theologians for the purpose of drawing on the different perspectives and insights that they bring. This council also intends to normalize the diverse theological convictions and insights in line with finding helpful resources to the complex nature of GBV and faith. The TACGBV assist in developing helpful resources which SAFFI incorporates into its training and support services to religious leaders and faith communities. The TACGBV also serves the purpose of stretching its members to consider specific themes and apply their minds and hearts as they offer crucial insights and helpful theological guidance from the holy scriptures and ancient teachings to address GBV concerns.

**Commented [MR4]:** Rather converge? What is normal and who decides?

In many ways the TACGBV also offer very helpful insights to RLs, lay counsellors and faith communities who would otherwise not be aware of the resources available from diverse religions and denominations. This is particularly helpful in the South African context where there is an increase in interfaith unions and families.

#### **2.7.7.7. The SAFFI Domestic Violence Training and Capacity Strengthening Model for RLs and Faith Communities**

One of the key activities of SAFFI involves training RLs on their role in combating and preventing DV and IPA and equipping them with the tools to do so. In the beginning stages of SAFFI's establishment, strategies were aimed at sensitizing RLs around the topic of DV with a specific emphasis on IPA and the role of the faith sector in addressing the faith dimensions of DV/IPA. This was done through the sacred conversations, roundtable discussions, dialogues and workshops. As awareness began to grow and as SAFFI established more credibility with RLs and other key stakeholders, the Organisation began to deepen its work with RLs through intra-faith trainings through the implementation of the SAFFI Domestic Violence Pastoral Care Training and Capacity Strengthening Model for Religious Leaders and faith communities, also referred to as the SAFFI Model. As SAFFI built and strengthened its relationship with and built rapport with RLs, it became evident that there were few or no spaces for RLs to receive psycho-social support for themselves and their families. With the funding support of the Western Cape Department of Social Development (DSD), SAFFI started to offer this psycho-social support services to RLs since 2016

From inception to the point of writing SAFFI has worked with up to 1500 RLs, lay leaders and members of the faith sector in the Western Cape. From 2010 till the time of writing SAFFI has

trained RLs in Atlantis, Khayelitsha, Edgemoed, Bonteheuwel, Hanover Park, Oudtshoorn, Phillipi, Bishop Lavis, Strand, Bredasdorp, and Ceres in the Western Cape of South Africa.

The overall objective of the SAFFI Training Model is aimed at strengthening the pastoral care capacity of -RLs and faith communities and other government and civil society organisations working to contribute towards the reduction and eradication of GBV and DV<sup>62</sup>. The trainings facilitate self-reflection and skills development. In these trainings SAFFI, together with the RLs, critique the faith sectors current understandings of gender and GBV and find new reactive and proactive strategies which can be used in future. This aims to empower and mobilise RLs, lay counsellors and faith communities to more adequately engage with work in relation to gender relations, DV and IPA. Support networks between SAFFI, the RLs and the community are created in these trainings so that the work becomes sustainable and long-term. The aims of the SAFFI Model include:

- To equip RLs/faith communities with basic knowledge about the complex dynamics and faith dimensions related to GBV in intimate relationships, families and communities.
- 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 DV training and pastoral care capacity strengthening of RLs and faith communities.

These are outlined in the table below:

**Table A: Program Design**

Phase	Outputs (Activities)	Outcomes (Expected Result)
<b>Phase 1: Recruitment of RLs and Sensitizer Workshop</b>	Sensitizer workshops on Domestic Violence for RLs, lay counsellors and stakeholders. Follow up Fieldwork, Planning meetings and Debriefing sessions with RLs and Lay Counsellors/Leaders.	Increased knowledge about domestic violence pastoral care and awareness amongst RLs and faith Communities

<sup>62</sup> Ismail, F & Petersen, E 2013, *Ubuntu in the Home* Project Report, South African Faith and Family Institute.



<b>Phase 2: 5-Day Domestic Violence Pastoral/Spiritual Care training</b>	Training for RLs and lay counsellors/leaders.	Improved capability (knowledge and skill) on domestic violence pastoral care of RLs and faith communities
<b>Phase 3: Support services</b>	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.
<b>Phase 4: Continuous In-service Training, Mentoring, Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Support Service.</b>	Further training and mentoring will be shaped and guided by the different contexts and needs of RLs who have been through the 5-day Training. In-service trainings offered at the time of writing include: Prevention in Action training, 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.	Increased technical support to faith communities
<b>Phase 5: Monthly or quarterly meetings with RLs and faith communities and establishing and supporting RLs forums on GBV.</b>	These meetings and forums provide a platform to discuss around themes on GBV/DV as a support network for RLs to deepen and further the work in their communities.	Faith Sector fully integrated into GBV forums and services. Established RLs forums on GBV.

The SAFFI Model is underpinned by a participatory action research methodology. The basic premise of ~~this methodology is 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.~~

~~that one does research, a programme is implemented, research is again done on the programme, necessary changes to the programme are made and this cycle is repeated.~~

Since 2012 SAFFI has completed Phases 1 and 2 of the SAFFI Model with seven different geographic communities in the Western Cape. As part of Phase 3, the 10-week series called “Our places of worship: true sanctuaries of hope and healing” program, was piloted in three of the geographic communities namely, Atlantis, Khayelitsha and Oudtshoorn. A total of five different Independent and Pentecostal denominations participated in a research project during 2016-2017. The development of this 10 week series is aimed at assisting RLs and faith communities to preach about GBV/DV/IPA, as well as to involve their congregations through engagement and reflection on various themes that are preached. The 10 week series was also developed as a capacity strengthening tool to guide RLs in taking the whole congregation on a journey of learning through raising awareness about the faith dimensions and root causes of VAW in intimate relationships, homes and the community. Throughout these sessions the

agency of congregation members' and their capacity to support one another are cultivated and encouraged.

Phases 4 and 5 have taken shape through additional trainings such as the Pre-marital Counselling Training (aimed at deepening RLs awareness of addressing gender issues in pre-marital counselling), the Family Preservation (wherein RLs reflect on their own families) and Prevention in Action Training (where RLs and faith communities begin to put their awareness of faiths role in combatting GBV into action). The establishment of Religious Leaders Forums on GBV in Atlantis and Oudtshoorn which serve as support networks for RLs in these areas also form part of these phases. In 2016, through a partnership with the Western Cape Department of Social Development (DSD), a therapeutic component in the form of psycho-social services and counselling for RLs was added to SAFFI's work. This was a need which religious leaders themselves communicated and was built into SAFFI's structure in order to support RLs and their families. This is in line with SAFFI's aim of making the family a space where everyone, including RLs themselves, is supported and respected. Pre-marital counselling support workshops for RLs have also formed part of this service.

## **VI.VIII. Implementing SAFFI's work**

### **1.1.8.1. Learnings from the recruitment and training of staff**

In order to implement the Domestic Violence Training and Capacity Strengthening Model in 2012 SAFFI decided to recruit facilitators. The idea was that facilitators would be trained to mobilise RLs in their own communities, recruit them into the training, and then facilitate those training workshops. SAFFI drew on their own database and advertised to recruit the appropriate staff. SAFFI was also mindful in wanting to include representatives of the various identity groups and sectors present in South Africa. However, although those chosen were diverse in terms of gender, language, and geography, due to the limited time allocated to the recruitment and screening process, SAFFI-only Christian facilitators from racially diverse contexts were recruited. Those selected as facilitators were screened based on prior domestic violence training or counselling experience, their personal commitment to their own faith, on their interest and commitment to the work of SAFFI and on their willingness to engage the self-reflective approach to SAFFI's work. SAFFI recruited facilitators with a strong faith commitment and interest in gender equality and transforming GBV<sup>63</sup>. Seven out of eight facilitators had some exposure to DV either through their work or personal experience.

It was clear through the trainings that facilitators were not divorced from the realities which they were seeking to intervene in. Most shared extensively from their personal experiences either as victims, survivors or as counsellors and training sessions became a platform for personal growth and sharing among participants. This training proved to be an exercise in capacity-building while also developing a firm belief that RLs have the capabilities to help victims. The process also served as an opportunity for facilitators themselves to develop a

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<sup>63</sup>Ismail, F & Petersen, E 2013.

positive self-image whilst helping to heal emotional and psychological wounds. Therefore, those who SAFFI initially thought would come to assist in the implementation of the project had become the beneficiaries of the same project.

Although the training resulted in many positives for facilitators, some challenges were also encountered. Even though some facilitators had either professional or personal experience with GBV or DV, it was the first time that any of them had received formal training. More specifically, it was the first time that they had had to address the faith dimensions of GBV. SAFFI also realised that not all participants had adequate facilitation skills or experience. Furthermore, facilitators struggled to juggle their existing jobs with the work required by SAFFI. Last, some facilitators found that, due to various power dynamics, they were not comfortable and confident in addressing RLs on the topic of GBV. These critical learnings meant that in July 2012, those recruited as facilitators would act as fieldworkers and their work was limited to: mobilizing and recruiting RLs, informing them about project updates, organizing workshops together with SAFFI, and maintaining and building trust and relationships with RLs in their community.

SAFFI's experience demonstrates that recruitment and training processes should allocate the time and resources needed to fully support and equip trainees and in building a supportive team dynamic to facilitate the task ahead. SAFFI also recognises that because not much work has been done in the form of interventions targeted at the nexus between faith and GBV in South Africa, facilitators with experience dealing with GBV as well its faith dimensions are hard to come by. SAFFI eventually found an additional facilitator to Petersen who had the adequate experience, passion and self-reflective insight to assist in facilitating sessions appropriately. However, attention to training and supporting all staff is something which SAFFI will continue to build in order to maintain the integrity of the work.

It is important to recognise that staff, volunteers and fieldworkers are also impacted by an organisations work and that their journeys of change can also become important measures of the organisations ability to practice its values and conduct its work. Creating trust amongst staff, volunteers and consultants and finding good working rhythms between individuals has been an important part of SAFFI's successes, whilst the absence of this has created challenges for example in effective co-facilitation.

#### **1.2.8.2. Implementing the SAFFI Domestic Violence Training and Capacity Strengthening Model**

The most significant learning gauged from the implementation of the Domestic Violence Training and Capacity Strengthening Model was that such a process needs time. Initially SAFFI thought that the model would be completed within one year of the project life cycle. However, in most areas the model was not implemented as a linear, predictable one. Due to fieldworkers dropping out, funding restrictions and challenges, the nature and availability of fieldworkers and RLs, and because of the complexity of navigating faith and GBV, most parts of the model took longer than expected. However, this has demonstrated that SAFFI's work does not involve a once-off, quick fix to GBV, rather it is a continuous journey of learning,

implementing and adapting that SAFFI is taking in conjunction with RLs and others working towards combating GBV.

#### 1.3.8.3. Reflecting on Working with RLs in the Western Cape

It is important for facilitators working with RLs to be well equipped to engage with RLs in respectful yet confident ways. It was equally important for SAFFI to build trust and rapport with RLs. One way which SAFFI has learnt to do this is by taking seriously the needs and experiences of the RLs. For example, many participants expressed the need (explicitly or implicitly) for psycho-social support for RLs, lay leaders and their families. By addressing this need through providing this support SAFFI was building trust by taking seriously the agency of participants in shaping the work and by simply acknowledging the participants' humanity.

It is also important that facilitators are equipped and experienced in managing the power relations that form part of interactions with RLs. In SAFFI's experience unequal power relations between facilitators or staff and RLs was often compounded by the intersection of faith and violence against women and is something which RLs need to be made aware of and necessary support measures need to be put in place for facilitators.

#### 1.4.8.4. Government Support and Funding

A common response when approaching donors for money, particularly government, is that they do not fund religious programs or churches. In SAFFI's experience, donor agencies and government recognise the need to work with the faith sector but their funding models and reporting structures have not necessarily been adapted to enable this to happen effectively.

At the end of 2011 SAFFI was able to receive financial assistance from the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR) however this was in the form of a donation for a campaign rather than consistent funding. In 2012 SAFFI received government funding through the Department of Social Development (DSD). This was gained as a result of the DSD needing access to the faith sector. However, because SAFFI's work did not easily fit into any of the existing indicators to which the DSD reports, this partnership dissolved after two years. SAFFI was then moved to the Victim Empowerment Program (VEP) in government but received a fraction of the funding which they received before as VEP wanted SAFFI to do singular, once-off workshops in the Western Cape. This went against the type of long term work SAFFI's model proposed and did not allow for the long term monitoring of results.

Recently the DSD has approached SAFFI again and there is an evolving discussion regarding better reporting structures and systems which would be beneficial to both partners. A negotiation which has been reached is that SAFFI include psycho-social counselling services to RLs and their families as part of its work. Thus far this addition has proven beneficial to both SAFFI and the DSD.

SAFFI has also been supported by the Joint Gender Fund (JGF). This donor has not only provided financial assistance to the organisation but has invested in self-care and wellness initiatives for the staff of the organisations it works with. SAFFI has sensed a real commitment from the JGF and the positive, supportive relationship with the donor has enabled SAFFI to work deeply, to think critically and to engage meaningfully with its work and participants.

**Commented [MR5]:** I would suggest inserting this so this finding has more context for the JGF

SAFFI's experience with donors and government thus far, indicates the power funders have to shape and support certain interventions. However, it also points to the need for government and funders to tailor their reporting structures. SAFFI's experience especially points to the significant struggles experienced by those engaging with the faith sector. A plethora of theoretical and practical evidence exist which points to the need for the faith sector to be actively engaged and trained in providing solutions to not only GBV but a myriad of social justice and human rights issues. Donors therefore need to begin to recognise this and develop funding models which are better equipped to support work in civil society which requires lengthy trust building processes, and long term, in-depth work. The benefits of supportive donors in the values and missions of the organisations it supports are invaluable to an organisations work and more donors should look at ways of not only financially assisting organisations but providing other forms of support.

#### **1.5.8.5. Negotiating notions of Faith and Family within the GBV Sectors**

A key challenge in establishing SAFFI was presented by the significant tension which exists between the faith sector and the GBV/gender sector. Identifying as a Faith and Family Institute meant that the GBV sector largely pinned SAFFI down as another organisation which "protects" the traditional notion of the family. Many such organisations, especially those linked to churches or faith sectors have often advocated for the maintenance of traditional gender roles and are perceived as perpetuating messages which contribute to gender oppression and GBV (for example, that marriage is a sacred bond that should never be broken, regardless of the situation). On the other hand, faith communities were apprehensive about an organisation which deals with GBV as they view the sector as sometimes advocating for rights which the faith sector does not agree with (such as the acceptance of homosexual marriages).

For SAFFI to be meaningful and relevant to both sectors, they needed to be brought together in recognition that they could both be of more value to abused women when their expertise and connections were combined. SAFFI's first point of call was to get GBV and faith sectors to acknowledge that the tension between the two sectors did not help abused women and less so the perpetrators of GBV. Furthermore, the organisation needed to be intentional about identifying the strong connection between GBV and religion and in pointing out the critical role faith could play in creating a positive shift. In this respect, credible, evidence-based research, as was conducted by Petersen, was invaluable.

In order to create a bridge between the faith and GBV sectors, and to dismiss any false assumptions about SAFFI which may have inhibited its credibility, some clarification needed to be provided on the use of faith and family in the organisation's name. SAFFI uses faith to refer to a personal sense of God or a sense of the source where you come from. This is different to organized religion, which is a space where faith can grow and challenge. Family is a term used because it is understood as where individuals would have their first experience of faith. SAFFI had to make clear that as an organisation it is not too concerned about what the structure of the family looks like, but rather that this structure should be a safe space for all people to live out their humanity.

For any emerging organisation, especially those interacting in contested spaces or sectors, establishing trust and creating credibility around the organisation as well as the founder or staff is an important part of the journey. SAFFI did this by meeting with influential individuals in sector and by being involved in both religious platforms such as the Cape Town Interfaith Initiative (CTII) and the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum (WCRLF), as well as GBV platforms – which Petersen’s experience as a social worker and director of a home for abused women afforded her. Ties formed with senior RLs also assisted in creating a sense of credibility. Petersen’s role in establishing credibility for the organisation was closely linked her personal and professional identity.

Another assumption which created a barrier to collaborative work was that SAFFI was a Christian organisation rather than a multi-faith organisation. The multi-faith aspect of SAFFI often proved helpful in winning the trust of the GBV sector but sometimes created doubt for RLs. Some RLs carry doubts about how multi-faith initiatives could work. This meant that SAFFI has to be intentional about approaching various faith sectors and including representatives from various faith in dialogue panels and as facilitators and speakers in other engagements. Noting this, SAFFI had to present itself as a learning organisation which provided the entire faith sector with shaping a new initiative in South Africa.

The official launch of the organisation in 2010 was also a key opportunity for SAFFI to bridge the tensions between the faith and GBV sector, create a conversation and trust around multi-faith initiatives, and draw people to the integrity of the work SAFFI would do. The launch took the shape of a dialogue event called Sacred Conversations. Five small group round table discussions were held around, IPA, Faith and the Perpetrator, Faith and HIV/AIDS, and Faith and LGBTI+. Panels were intentionally multi-faith and facilitators were careful to keep the conversation flowing around the themes at hand. Seeing the benefits of such conversations and having evidence that a multi-faith initiative could be handled without placing one view above the other was an integral part of creating trust and credibility.

SAFFI continues to work hard to create clarity and trust in the organisation and its work. However, the lessons learnt and the intentionality of the path followed thus far is good practice for other organisations to build upon.

## **VII.IX. Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of the report is to document the motivation behind the establishment of SAFFI; how it went about implementing its vision and mission guided by its values; and what lessons have been learned for the broader purpose of contributing to increasing the knowledge base on community-based locally developed gender-based violence programmes in South Africa.

This report describes the development of SAFFI as an organisation, based on the vision, experiences and insights of its founder, Elizabeth Petersen. Some of the discourses, theories

and network relationships which have informed SAFFI's understanding of GBV intervention are discussed.

The report illuminates the innovative and unique contribution of SAFFI's work at the interface of faith communities and the GBV sector. It also highlights some of the challenges and learnings which SAFFI has experienced in creating a niche for itself as an organisation. These learnings are based on reflections and recordings of nine years of tireless work and will be used to deepen and sustain the work of SAFFI going forward.

The report is also an invitation to leaders, activists and practitioners, across diverse societal sectors and contexts, to consider seriously the role of faith in GBV interventions. It invites those working as catalysts for change to not only deal with the various symptoms of society's social ills, but to begin to address some of the macro power systems which cause and shape them. This can be done by addressing power relations within oneself, within ones organisation and within the society we live in. This work can be done in a way which respects the dignity of all people and the knowledge systems and cultural traditions of those represented in society. Lastly, this report urges organisations, practitioners, academics, theologians, community members, and the wide array of people working towards ending GBV to continue engaging in conversations which foster holistic, sustainable and meaningful action. It is important that these conversations do not reflect the oppressive systems we seek to dismantle. The conversations and work to eradicate GBV should continuously be opened up and made accessible and beneficial to those who are the most marginalized in society and most affected by the oppression.

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