



SAFERSPACES CONFERENCE

PREVENTING VIOLENCE THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY

IMPACT OF HARMFUL GENDER NORMS ON GBVF AND VIOLENCE

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Sonke Gender Justice

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A bit about Sonke Gender Justice...

- Founded in 2006, Sonke is a womxn's rights organisation that is committed to feminist principles, using a rights-based and gender-transformative approach to achieve human rights and gender justice.
- Sonke was established with a firm conviction that men and boys have a critical contribution to make in ending violence, in transforming gender roles and ultimately in being part of the solution to achieving gender justice.
- Sonke works at a community, national, regional, and global level. In South Africa, Sonke is a registered NGO with offices in the Western Cape, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and Eastern Cape Provinces. Our Wellness Centre is situated in Gugulethu, Cape Town. Sonke also has offices in Kampala in Uganda, Buea in Cameroon, Antananarivo in Madagascar and Lome in Togo.

Outline of Presentation

- Unpacking Gender Roles, Norms and Stereotypes
- Impact of harmful norms
- A gender transformative approach
- What can you do to prevent and challenge harmful norms or stereotypes?

Unpacking Gender Roles, Norms and Stereotypes

- Each society has a set of ideas about how we expect men and women to dress, behave, and present themselves.
- Social norms are contextually and socially derived collective expectations of appropriate behaviors.
- Gender roles means how we're expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves based upon our assigned sex. For example, girls and women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and be polite, accommodating, and nurturing. Men are generally expected to be strong, aggressive, and bold.
- These roles can be different from group to group (dependent on culture, belief, ethnicity etc). They can also change in the same society over time.

Unpacking Gender Roles, Norms and Stereotypes cont.

- A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men.
- A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives.
- Harmful social norms that sustain GBV include women's sexual purity, protecting family honor over women's safety, men's authority to discipline women (views women as minors) and children, traditional view of women as care givers-means this responsibility almost falls exclusively on women-unpaid care burden.
- These roles/norms and stereotypes reinforce unequal gender power relations.

How is it harmful?

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most prevalent and persistent issues facing women and girls globally. South Africa has one of the highest levels of sexual and gender-based violence in the world. President Ramaphosa refers to it as a crisis, a war against women. GBV has devastating socio-economic impacts- In 2014 KPMG released a report ***Too Costly to Ignore -gender-based violence costs South Africa between R28.4 billion and R42.4 billion per year – or between 0.9% and 1.3% of GDP annually.***

when it results in a violation or violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as:

- Not criminalizing marital rape, perceiving that women are the sexual property of men; and
- Failing to investigate, prosecute and sentence sexual violence against women, not believing rape victims/survivors, or believing that victims of sexual violence agreed to sexual acts based solely on their dressing (“*she wanted it*”).
- Perceiving domestic violence as a ‘private matter’ to be resolved privately or by the family
- Honour killings, child marriages, FGM, acid attacks, forced sterilizations.

A gender transformative approach

- There is developing evidence base suggests that prevention programs with a “gender transformative” approach, or an explicit focus on **questioning** gender norms and expectations, show particular promise in achieving GBV prevention outcomes.
- Sonke- through its work of engaging men and boys- evidence of the impact of men’s engagement endeavors is beginning to emerge, particularly regarding interventions aimed at fostering gender equitable and nonviolent attitudes and behaviors among men.-through its campaigns and training- *One man Can, Fatherhood initiatives-which focus on changing the narratives around parenting, childcare responsibility.*
- Primary prevention programs seek to facilitate change by addressing the underlying causes and drivers of violence against women and girls at a societal level- transforming how roles/norms are perceived-thus interrupting violence at a basic level.
- Violence is a *learned behaviour*, one is not born with it, therefore it follows that it can be *unlearned*.
- Interventions targeting attitude and behavior change, however, represent just one kind of approach within a heterogeneous collection of prevention efforts , these can also include community mobilization, policy change, and social activism.

What can **YOU** do to prevent and challenge harmful norms or stereotypes?

It is important that people are able to feel equal and valued no matter their sex, race, gender or gender identity.

- Point it out — Magazines, TV, film, and the Internet are full of negative gender stereotypes. Sometimes these stereotypes are hard for people to see unless they're pointed out.
- Respect people regardless of their gender identity. Create a safe space for people to express themselves and their true qualities regardless of what society's gender stereotypes and expectations are.
- Speak up — If someone is making sexist jokes and comments, whether online or in person, challenge them.