

Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention (ADAPT) South Africa

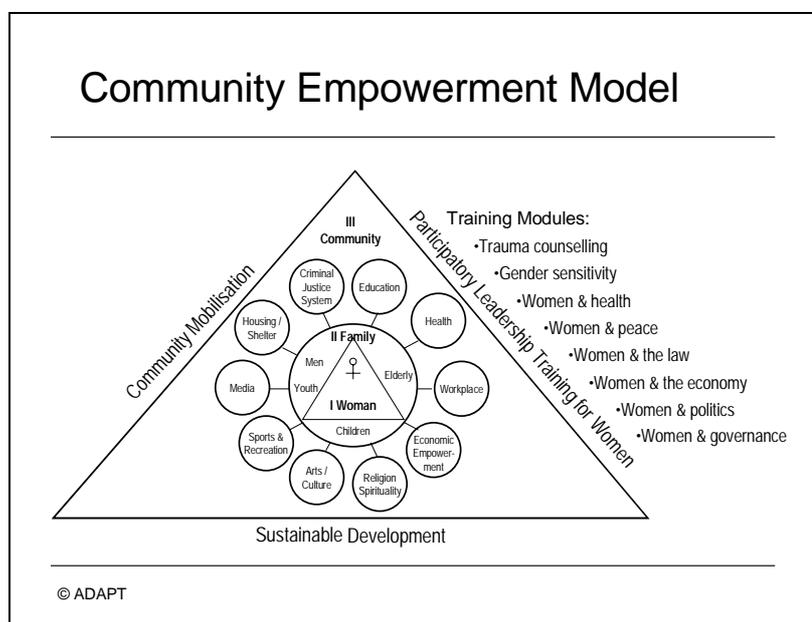
Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT) is a non-profit organization that started operating as a small entity in 1994. At the beginning, the focus was on providing counseling and support services for abused women. Although the initial emphasis was on women, the beneficiaries of the services have expanded to include men, young people and the elderly.

ADAPT seeks to achieve a society free from domestic and sexual violence against women, through the creative participation of both men and women. ADAPT's approach emphasizes healing and recognizes the inherent goodness in everyone. ADAPT is committed to changing the social values and structural factors that perpetuate violence against women by promoting a spirit of interdependence, mutual respect and co-existence between women and men. The organization is particularly concerned with the black family that has been most affected by violence in the home and in the society.

Programme Description

From the beginning, ADAPT has adopted a holistic approach to dealing with the causes of domestic violence. The majority of ADAPT activities that occur at the community level focus on prevention while service delivery and broader level advocacy at the local and national level is also done.

ADAPT's strength lies within their innovative community-based prevention efforts. A community empowerment model was developed that emphasizes the influence and responsibility of the whole community in GBV prevention. The core of the approach is facilitating change within individuals and the community. It emphasizes the importance of changing attitudes and behaviours that perpetrate violence and that this change must occur at an individual level with women and men as well as within local institutions.



The community empowerment model recognizes that while men are the primary perpetrators of GBV, they also need to be central in the solution. By adopting the model, communities can address the problem through combined individual efforts and collective institutional change. Recognizing the importance of working with men at the community level in order to affect meaningful change, ADAPT established the men's programme in 1997.

Objectives of the Men's Programme

1. To end men's violent and aggressive behaviour toward women and other men.
2. To create healing circles for men.
3. To help men take responsibility for their violence and develop alternative ways of dealing with conflict.
4. To increase men's understanding of the root causes of violence in society.
5. To develop intervention programmes that focus largely on preventing violence from occurring.

Activities

Counseling and support services for men. This includes one-on-one support, couple counseling and men's support groups within the community.

Gender sensitivity training for men. Community-based participatory workshops provide forums for men to examine concepts such as gender, masculinity, relationships, violence and rights.

Trauma counseling training for men. ADAPT trains interested male volunteers on trauma counseling to enable them to effectively assist men who are not comfortable or find it difficult to accept counseling services from a female counselor.

Public events. High profile events such as drama and men's marches can help put new ideas and issues into the public domain. When large numbers of people are involved, it generates considerable interest and momentum.

Mentorship for boys in local schools and youth groups. Responsible male adults who adhere to positive family values, hold responsible jobs and participate actively in community initiatives are requested to mentor young boys who are in local schools and youth clubs.

Engaging men in community development issues. As it is typical for women to be involved in issues relating to community development, ADAPT encourages men to be active in community initiatives, e.g., safety audits, cleaning campaigns, economic empowerment initiatives, etc.

Outreach to taverns/shabeens. These drinking places provide ideal opportunities to engage men in a relaxed and informal way. ADAPT staff discuss alcohol abuse, violence and masculinity in these venues where men feel non-threatened.

Notable Innovation

Working with men to promote healing

ADAPT's analysis begins by seeing the woman as the focal point of the community's development yet also recognizes that men play a critical role in defining women's experience and as such need to be involved. Thus the following are recommendations based on our experience of working with men.

- Many men resist taking responsibility for their actions because they do not understand where their violence is originating from and what to do about it. Organizations can create safe space where men develop trust and can begin to take responsibility for their actions. This can help men take responsibility for their behaviour.
- It is important to encourage men to begin to 'own' their violence as a problem and as a result, begin the healing process. Part of the healing process is for the men to become active participants in preventing and ending GBV. They become part of the solution rather than remaining as part of the problem.
- Many women's organizations are reluctant to begin working with men. Our own stereotypes and prejudices must be examined.
- Recognize that it is often difficult for some men to volunteer because of other time commitments. Be flexible and work with, not against them.

- Meeting men in their own spaces (shebeens/taverns) can be very useful in engaging them in positive, non-threatening discussions.
- It is important to have a variety of consistent activities that reach out to and support men. Ideally, men's programmes are embedded in broader efforts to prevent GBV.