

Nisaa Institute for Women's Development South Africa

The Nisaa Institute for Women's Development is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, which focuses on violence prevention and the empowerment of women who have been abused at the hands of their partners. The organization offers services to the survivors of domestic violence and their children. Nisaa was started by a group of committed women activists, in response to the growing problem of violence against women. The organization was initiated at the end of 1993 and launched in April 1994. Nisaa is opposed to all forms of oppression, exploitation and violence against women and subscribes to the principle of non-sectarianism and social transformation.

Nisaa believes that raising public awareness is the first step in persuading people to change their behaviour, and in improving legal polices and services for women.

Objectives

1. Encourage women to gain control over their lives in ways that they deem appropriate.
2. Provide refuge for women survivors of violence and their children when their lives are endangered by interpersonal violence.
3. Establish organizational links and mechanisms that enable the use of the community, municipal, national and international resources for women's emancipation.
4. Lobby for appropriate legislation and resources that protect and maintain the dignity of survivors of violence.
5. Raise awareness on violence against women through public awareness education, media intervention and a range of training.

Programme Description

Nisaa's work has been consolidated into 6 programmes each containing a number of ongoing projects. The programmes are as follows:

- Providing **emergency shelter** for women and children whose lives are endangered by violence perpetrated against them by intimate partners/husbands.
- Conducting various forms of **counseling services** for adults and children as a form of intervention. This includes crisis telephone counseling, individual and group counseling.
- Promoting **public awareness and education** on violence against women to relevant stakeholders and to a broader audience locally, nationally and internationally, including the SADC region.
- Developing and conducting **training** on specific competencies, gender issues and violence against women.
- Producing and developing **publications** at a range of levels and disseminating relevant information to a broader national and international audiences.
- Consolidating and expanding **outreach services** to Orange Farm and Soweto.

GBV Prevention Activities

Date Rape Campaign

This campaign includes a small booklet, posters and stickers for adolescents. It alerts teenagers to the high incidence of date rape and abuse among youth. It also offers information on how best to prevent date rape and more general information on sexual rights and sexuality.

Peace on Earth begins at Home

This campaign developed during the holiday season, included a billboard, posters and greeting cards. The campaign makes the connection between domestic violence and global violence.

Radio campaigns.

Nisaa's services are advertised regularly on different radio stations. Also on radio is a 30 episode drama that aims to increase awareness of violence against women and HIV/AIDS. It reaches rural communities in hard to reach provinces in South Africa.

Nisaa Resource Center and Website.

Provide information for other civil society organizations, activists, women experiencing violence and other interested partners. The campaigns are highlighted, as well as Nisaa's services and outreach. This programme is also linked to www.womensnet.org.za where Nisaa offers online counseling and education services via the internet.

Anti-Rape Bus Campaign.

Posters, booklets, billboards, 20 buses, 12 taxis, and major daily newspapers carried the message of 'You're only half a man if you rape a woman'. This campaign was seen all over town and took the message to large numbers of people. It sparked public debate and strongly stated that rape will not be tolerated in our communities.

Notable Innovation

Diversifying use of media

Nisaa has expanded beyond traditional media outlets to deepen the scope of their public awareness campaigns. Key recommendations to other NGOs considering diversifying their use of media may consider the following.

- It is important distinguish between the 'vehicle' used to promote the message and the message itself.
- NISAA considers any form of mass communication as working with the media and not just the traditional radio, TV and newspaper approach.
- 'Letter box media', such as using postcards, pamphlets, posters, cards, billboards and stickers to communicate messages to a vast number of the community members is a useful strategy.
- Mainstream media such as radio and television can be used to consolidate the ongoing messages located in other sources. The variety of methods is complementary as they reinforce the message as well as broaden the range of audience reached.
- Personal and traditional media such as petition collection, film screening followed by discussions, protests and demonstration marches adds a live energy to the message and enables a whole range of people to participate in the campaign.
- New media that harnesses the power of information technology is also a powerful tool that any organization interested in creating a broader network should consider.