



POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCING OF THE OPERATIONS OF SHELTERS FOR ABUSED WOMEN

In S v Baloyi the Constitutional Court placed a clear duty on the state to address domestic violence. As the form of violence most frequently experienced by womenⁱ, this obligation is entirely necessary. One in five South African women will experience violence at the hands of at least one of her intimate male partners over the course of her lifetimeⁱⁱ. At its most lethal, this violence can culminate in murder, with more than half of women's homicides in 2009 caused by their intimate partnersⁱⁱⁱ.

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Shelters disrupt this violence in at least two ways: they provide immediate sanctuary and protection to women and their children; and, as places of reflection and support, can provide women with a bridge out of despair to a life free from violence. This is evident from research^{iv} showing that more than half of women do not return to their partners after leaving shelters. Shelters are also able to assist women obtain employment – although, given the state of the South African labour market, their success in doing so varies. ^vThese benefits are not only to individual women and children but to society more broadly. Enabling women to leave their abusive partners contributes to reducing women's future use of health facilities, social development services, as well as their use of court and policing services. By limiting children's exposure to violence, shelters also help reduce the likelihood of children growing up to either perpetrate or experience violence as adults.

However, these important functions of protection, prevention and regeneration need to be strengthened by policy more closely attuned to abused women's needs, coupled to a budget adequate to realising these policy goals. This brief examines existing policy around shelters for abused women and recommends how this can be expanded and costed to more effectively uphold women's rights and needs.

Domestic violence Shelters and their purpose

Shelters must provide for basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing, and safety and security. However, they must also offer more than somewhere to sleep if they are to be effective in assisting women and their children to lead lives free from violence. They therefore also need to attend to their residents' health and well-being, as well as support the development of women's skills and capabilities – especially if their economic entrapment is to be challenged. While these needs, and the rights they correspond to, cannot all be addressed immediately, the Free State High Court has ruled that these should be progressively realised over time.^{vi}

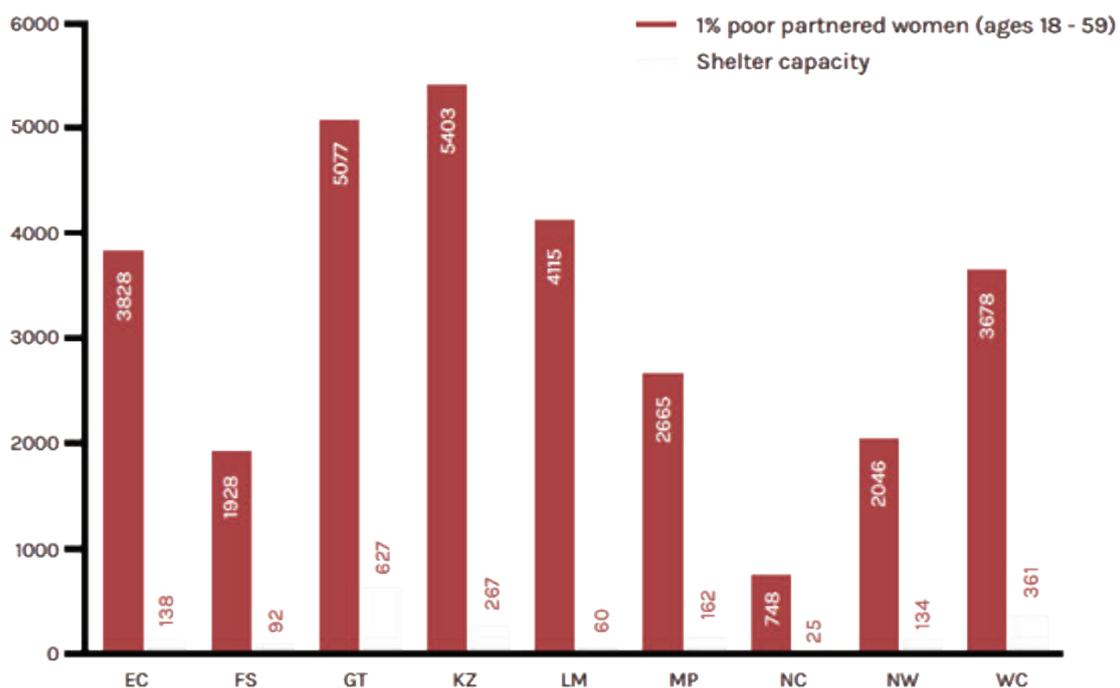
There are at least two aspects to the progressive realisation of abused women's rights in relation to sheltering:

- i. An increase in the number of shelters to ensure their accessibility
- ii. An extension and deepening of their services.

1. INCREASING THE AVAILABILITY OF SHELTERS

It is unknown how many shelters currently exist – not least because the Department of Social Development uses the term to cover a range of different sorts of facilities that do not all meet the criteria for shelters, as determined by the 2004 Minimum Standards for Service Delivery in Victim Empowerment (Victims of Crime and Violence). Furthermore, research^{vii} shows that existing shelters are not exclusive to abused women and their children but house a range of women in difficult life circumstances - and sometimes even men. But regardless of the current number, there are too few shelters to meet the extent of need. The 2016 Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare^{viii} illustrates this graphically, using 1% of poor women aged 18 to 59 years who are either married or cohabiting as the proxy for need.

Figure 1: Comparison of need and capacity – shelters for abused women^{ix}



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i. The Department of Social Development's (DSD) 2013 – 2018 strategy around sheltering will become outdated by the end of 2018. The new strategy, which should be developed in -conjunction with organisations representing abused women's interests, must set out a comprehensive plan for progressively increasing the number of shelters over time. This plan must ensure equity both within and between provinces and include standards, targets and indicators that measure the DSD's progress.
- ii. The strategy must be linked to policy that clearly details the spectrum of accommodation that ought to be available to abused women. This must distinguish between and define victim safe spaces at one end of the spectrum, to shelters and transitional housing at the other end.
- iii. Domestic violence shelters have become generic sheltering services that even house men. The latter practice is not at all recommended. It is also open to question whether or not generalised services can equally serve the needs of refugees, trans and lesbian women, homeless women and women abused by their partners (noting that some women can occupy a number of these categories simultaneously). This conversion of domestic violence shelters into generic women's shelters needs to be debated as it may affect the availability and accessibility of shelters to women who have experienced abuse.

2. STRENGTHENING AND SUPPORTING SHELTER SERVICES

Research^x around abused women's use of shelters points to the sort of assistance they require both to address the effects of abuse, as well as craft new lives. This includes:



PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

In the form of individual and group counselling and, where appropriate, family services, provided by staff skilled in addressing depression, anxiety and/or suicidal feelings, as well as substance abuse.



HEALTHCARE

Shelter residents require treatment for abuse-related injuries; ante-natal and post-natal care; HIV-related services; and services for a range of other chronic conditions.



LEGAL AND PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

Assistance with obtaining protection orders, laying criminal charges, or applying for a divorce or maintenance. Residents also need to be helped with applying for identity documents and child support grants.



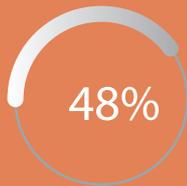
CHILDCARE AND OTHER SUPPORT TO CHILDREN

Childcare (to enable women to attend job/skills training and/or search for employment); programmes to assist children who have witnessed violence and who may themselves also be victims of abuse; and support to women whose children have not accompanied them to the shelter – even if this only includes assessing their safety. Children should also receive comprehensive health assistance.



SKILLS TRAINING, FURTHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

women in shelters have a high degree of economic disadvantage. The recent research found that:



had access to any sort of income



unemployed



had not completed high school.

The high level of support and assistance required by women and their children underlines the importance of an appropriate ratio of shelter staff to women. Existing policy such as the 2013 Framework for Social Welfare Services^{xi} and the National Strategy for Sheltering Services for Victims of Crime and Violence in South Africa – 2013-2018^{xii} does not provide clear guidance in this regard.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i. Based on assessment of the needs of women and their children, coupled with practice-based evidence, we calculate the staff-beneficiary ratio at one social worker to 15 women and their children, allowing for an average of six hours every month to be spent on individual counselling and support, group work and any other clinical or supportive intervention that may be required for each woman. We propose the same ratio for the social auxiliary worker, who would be responsible for providing much of the practical support to women and their children. In addition to these staff, we also recommend the employment of three housemothers and a shelter manager.
- ii. Drawing on and refining the costing that informed the Free State High Court's final 2014 decision in National Association of Welfare Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations and Others v MEC of Social Development, Free State and Others^{xiii} we calculate the core costs of a shelter housing 15 women and 30 children every month in Table 1. Because these costs were calculated in 2013, they have been adjusted for inflation.



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VARIABLE AND SEMI-VARIABLE OPERATIONAL COSTS FOR 15 WOMEN AND 30 CHILDREN

VARIABLE EXPENSES:

Travel	199.59
Water and electricity	513.59
Food supplies	1 082.64
Clothing and toiletries	291.40
Domestic consumables (cleaning materials)	50.36
Leases	436.90
Total variable costs for one adult woman	2 574.48
Variable costs per child (2 324.62 x 2)	4 649.24
Total variable cost per woman (including children)	7 223.72

OVERHEAD COSTS: STAFF

1 Centre manager	17 481.36
1 social worker	14 934.40
1 social auxiliary worker	8 382.40
3 house mothers @R3 840/month each	10 920.00
Total monthly staff costs	51 718.16

OVERHEAD COSTS: COMMUNICATION:

Cell phone	453.61
Telephone/fax	2 872.83
Insurance	156.00
Internet	604.80
Security services	19 192.03
Total	23 279.27
OVERHEAD COSTS IN TOTAL FOR 2018	74 997.43

In 2018 the beneficiary cost per woman and her two children is calculated as R7 223.72. Assuming that the shelter is full each month, this will amount to an annual cost of R1 300 269.60. With the total annual cost of overhead expenses calculated as R899 969.16, this brings the annual core costs of a shelter housing 15 women to R2 200 238.76. This total will also vary according to the number of rooms in the shelter; those which can also only house five women and their children at any one time will obviously incur lower costs.

3. CURRENT GAPS IN POLICY

The review of shelter policy and research points both to where existing policy needs to be developed, as well as where new policy is required.

- i. If shelters are to remain general women's shelters, rather than domestic violence shelters then policies, standards and strategies must recognise this by ensuring that they address the full diversity of women housed by shelters. This requires investigation into the needs of those women resident in the shelter for reasons other than domestic violence.
- ii. Each form of assistance must also include minimum standards around the provision of the service. Ensuring that shelters reach and maintain these standards requires that they also be costed.
- iii. Current policy does not provide adequate guidance around services to children to shelters. Appropriate programmes and interventions must be developed for future shelter policies and strategies.
- iv. Policy development must involve departments other than the DSD, especially in relation to assisting women to secure a livelihood. Although the DSD standards and 2013-2018 strategy reflect an expectation that women will be trained around entrepreneurship and other skills designed to increase their employability, this is not feasible for DSD or the NPOs that run shelters, and nor is it funded. Social work training does not focus on the development of these capabilities, making it unlikely that social workers will be particularly successful in this regard – especially with a group of women as disadvantaged as those in shelters. What roles the Departments of Labour and Trade and Industry, as well as the relevant Sector Education and Training Authorities could play in providing skills, training and employment programmes to women in shelters must be explored.
- v. Women's current access to psychological and psychiatric services is limited. The Department of Health must consider how to make mental health services more accessible to shelter residents

ⁱ Kaminer, D, Grimsrud, A, Myer, L, Stein, DJ. and Williams, DR. (2008). 'Risk for post-traumatic stress disorder associated with different forms of interpersonal violence in South Africa.' *Social Science and Medicine* 67: 1589 – 1595.

ⁱⁱ Statistics South Africa. (2017). *South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 2016: Key Indicator Report*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

ⁱⁱⁱ Abrahams, N, Mathews, S, Martin LJ, Lombard, C. and Jewkes, R. (2013). 'Intimate Partner Femicide in South Africa in 1999 and 2009.' *PLoS Medicine* [Online] 10(4): e1001412. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001412. [Accessed 25 January 2018].

^{iv} Bhana K, Vetten L, Makhunga L and Massawe D. (2012). *Shelters housing women who have experienced abuse: policy, funding and practice*. Johannesburg: Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre; Bhana K, Lopes C and Massawe D. (2013). *Shelters housing women who have experienced abuse: policy, funding and practice. Profiling three shelters in the Western Cape*. Cape Town: Heinrich Böll Foundation and Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre; Lopes, C. and Mpani, P. (2017a). *Shelters housing women who have experienced abuse: policy, funding and practice. Profiling shelters in Mpumalanga*. Cape Town: Heinrich Böll Foundation; Lopes, C. and Mpani, P. (2017b). *Shelters housing women who have experienced abuse: policy, funding and practice. Profiling shelters in KwaZulu-Natal*. Cape Town: Heinrich Böll Foundation.

^v See note 4.

^{vi} National Association of Welfare Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations and Others v MEC of Social Development, Free State and Others (1719/2010) [2014] ZAFSHC 127 (28 August 2014)

^{vii} See note 4

^{viii} Department of Social Development. (2016). *Comprehensive Report on the Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997*. Department of Social Development.

^{ix} See note 8.

^x See note 4.

^{xi} Department of Social Development. (2013). *Framework for Social Welfare Services*. Department of Social Development.

^{xii} Department of Social Development. (n.d.). *National Strategy for Sheltering Services for Victims of Crime and Violence in South Africa – 2013-2018*. Department of Social Development.

^{xiii} See note 4.

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The Joint Gender Fund (JGF) is a collaborative funding mechanism between Irish Aid, Ford Foundation and Raith Foundation. It was established in 2008 and emerged from a commitment to enhance the impact of funding in the field of gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa. The Fund facilitates and builds operational and strategic cohesion between donors and aims towards strengthening the sector's response to GBV by contributing towards bolstering the capacity for more integrated, comprehensive and transformative approaches. The Joint Gender Fund is hosted at Hlanganisa Institute for Development in Southern Africa (HiDSA).

The National Shelter Movement of South Africa (NSMSA) was established to be the united voice on sheltering women and their children affected by gender-based violence. NSM is an umbrella organisation that is committed to helping women's shelters throughout the country network and build a collective voice for the protection and safety of women and children. As such, NSM brokers relationships between government and shelters (at provincial and national levels), and host workshops to help shelter leaders improve their operational capacity.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation is a publicly funded institution that is affiliated with but intellectually independent from the German Green party. The Foundation's work in Africa concentrates on promoting civil society, democratic structures, gender democracy and global justice. Together with partners, the Foundation works toward conflict prevention and search for solutions to the challenges of environmental degradation and the depletion of resources. To achieve these goals, the Foundation relies on disseminating information, creating a deeper understanding between actors in Africa and Europe, and supporting global dialogue.

Hlanganisa Institute for Development in South Africa (HiDSA) previously known as Hivos - South Africa, was established in 2006 to seek new and innovative solutions to persistent social challenges. HiDSA is an innovative intermediary grant maker for small community-based organisations aimed at strengthening social accountability, fostering active citizenry and promoting human rights in pursuit of social justice in Southern Africa. Towards this end we engage civil society and communities through capacity building, networking and advocacy.

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