

## Contribution: UN Secretary-General's Study on all forms of VAW

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### New and emerging trends in South Africa

There is renewed heightened attention to reported rape statistics<sup>1</sup>. The dynamics include:

- ⌘ Public disagreement between President Thabo Mbeki and rape activist, survivor and journalist, Charlene Smith, about the prevalence of rape and intersectionality of rape and race. Zimbabwean feminist writer and activist, Everjoice Win, also joined the fray.

*Mbeki in his weekly online essay<sup>2</sup>: "She was saying our cultures, traditions and religions as Africans inherently make every African man a potential rapist ... [a] view which defines the African people as barbaric savages."*

*Charlene Smith in response: "The president is in denial. I have been very careful to keep saying that rape has nothing to do with race"<sup>3</sup>*

- ⌘ Attempts by the Sexual Offences and Community Affairs Unit (SOCA) housed in the National Prosecuting Authority to lead a 'data-driven' strategy around rape, nationally and provincially. However, recently completed national research and the ensuing national "anti-rape strategy" have been embargoed – understood to be because the statistics contained in the research are under dispute.
- ⌘ An (alleged) directive to police stations to produce statistics showing a decrease in reported rape. This in the context of fairly static annual statistics (hovering around the 52 000) mark while the murder rate has been shown to have decreased in the decade of democracy. Organisations such as Rape Crisis Cape Town are trying to get the message to police that an *increase* in reported rape is desirable as it would indicate increased confidence in the police and the criminal justice system.

### Examples of good practice in combating all forms of VAW

The model I've been most impressed with is the "Women and Peacebuilding" programme devised by UMAC (U Managing Conflict), an NGO in Cape Town. It is impressive both in terms of the range and depth of its intervention with women in the Western (urban) and Eastern Cape (rural) provinces. It comprises:

- ⌘ Self-awareness and 'soft skills' development (conflict, leadership, assertiveness etc)
- ⌘ Marketable skills training (carpentry, beadwork, driving, etc)
- ⌘ Community research skills training
- ⌘ Community safety audit by participants
- ⌘ Mini – project by each participant to address one of the safety concerns raised in the community safety audit
- ⌘ Ongoing support and mentoring

It's not a direct VAW intervention, but instead builds the confidence, capacity and independence of poor women so that they are less vulnerable to violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: much of this is gleaned second-hand from discussions with Sam Waterhouse at Rape Crisis over recent weeks. I imagine that Rape Crisis will submit their own response to WK

<sup>2</sup> ANC Today: weekly online letter from the President

<sup>3</sup> From Mail & Guardian newspaper: [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za) reported on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2004

