

MISSION
WITH
CHILDREN

A mission
intervention tool,
to raise children's
awareness about
rape and gender
violence

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Introduction

This presentation will deal with:

The Gender realities for women in South Africa

- Gender, sexuality, biology, power, the effects of economic dependence of women and children
- The link between rape, HIV and life expectancy for women and children

The rape of children: South African Context

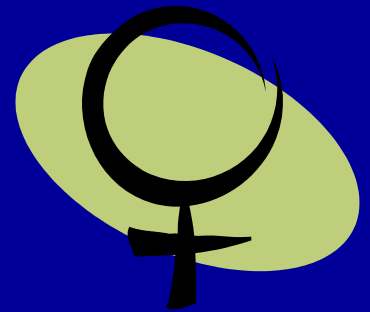
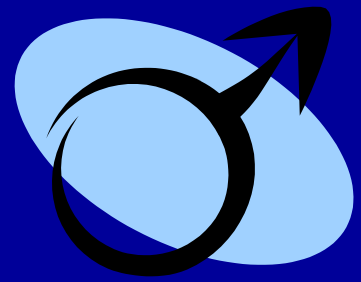
Failure to educate children about rape and gender violence

- The Tamar story for children as an awareness tool, story development, telling the story
- The agency of children

Mission with children: Points to ponder

Gender realities in S/Africa:

- Gender is different from biology, it is a **social construct**
- Men are responsible for the **majority** of production resources and decision making processes.
- Women are predominantly responsible for **reproductive** and productive activities within the **home**.
- Women have **less access to income, land, credit and education**.
- **Black rural women** make up the **poorest** segment of the S.A population.
- The extent of these realities is **different from context to context**



Gender Sexuality and Biology

key factors in the
sexual transmission
of HIV and gender
violence
and rape

Influence treatment
Care and
Support of HIV+ and
Victims of rape and
gender violence

Misunderstood and
inappropriately
used terms

Rape-HIV-Life Expectancy

- 59% of PLWHA in sub-Saharan Africa are women
- Half of PLWHA in S.A are women (primarily heterosexual women)
- While we celebrated democracy in 1994 Interpol listed S.A as having the highest level of reported rape in the world. Over a decade later S.A is still experiencing alarming high rates of rape.
- 147 women are raped everyday
- Recent statistics indicate that the average life expectancy of S.A women is 41.66 years.
- Some People really believe HIV, TB myths about sex with virgins!!!
- HOW CAN THESE FACTORS NOT BE RELATED???

POWER

- Power determines who receives **priority**
- The **balance of power** determines outcomes in a sexual relationship
- many **women and children are disempowered** by gender constructs
- Men have almost **unlimited sexual freedoms** in many cultures
- Women and children remain **powerless and without sexual autonomy**



WMA Photo - N. Colymba nte

Women's' and children's' economic dependence increases their vulnerability to gender violence and HIV

- Disempowerment of women/children to negotiate protection
- Less likely to leave an abusive relationship
- May exchange sex for money or favours
- Economic “sanctions” are imposed on women to pressure or penalize for non-submission
- Children: Sex in exchange for toys and gadgets, sex in exchange for food and employment



Global state of emergency: Children across the world are making the news headlines

- Across the world children are in turmoil. In South Africa children are in the news for being victims of violent sexual crimes.
- Children are also in the news for violent behavior. There are increased reports of violent crimes that are perpetuated by children.
- Substance abuse is at an all time high and the average age of child addicts decrease yearly.
- With accessibility to technology children are recording their violent and sexual exploits and circulating it to their friends this includes group sex in a school toilet, rape and even violent physical assault.
- Some schools have a “pregnancy epidemic”.

Children and mission

- Mission to children is based primarily on the mandate to care for the vulnerable and weak of society.
- How a society treats its children is a primary indicator of the humanity of that context.
- “Beautiful communities raise beautiful children”. Children are always the product of societies influence (nature and nurture theories).
- It would seem in many contexts that society and the church have failed children.



Africa - The Continent of Children

- 28 African countries-children in majority
- 325 million children under the age of 18, among them 34 million orphans
- 29 out of 30 countries which have the highest infant mortality rates are in Africa (Unisef 2004)
- 9 out of 10 countries in the world where less than half of children attend primary school are in Sub-Saharan Africa (Unisef 2006)
- 2.6 children living with Aids live in Africa

The rape of children

- Child rape situation: Nationwide. Disturbing, underreported and overwhelming.
- 58-60 children raped every day. 52 000 rapes in 2003 almost half were children. These figures are elusive due to many children being **threatened not to talk**.
- We hear horror stories of the rape and murder of minors: Little children and babies have had to have reconstructive surgeries, colonoscopies and hysterectomies after being raped.
- The incidence of child rape continue unabated despite Min. Sentence Act No. 105 of 1998 were legislation provides life sentence for perpetrators of rape of victims under 16.
- Sexual violence has perpetuated every place even the sacred space of the home and the church.
- There is a link between high rate of sexual violence and HIV in young girls

Failure to educate to children about dangers

- There is a marked absence of education and awareness on sexual violence for pre-school children.
- **Even the Child protection unit has been disbanded.**
- Children are hearing about rape and sexual violence from each other.
- **They grow up amidst sexual assault, rape and gender violence. They are exposed to sexual violence through every form of media.**
- Sunday schools and children's churches rarely discuss the issue of rape and sexual assault.
- **There is a need for vigilant URGENT action**



What is
being done
about this
sickening
plague???



The Tamar Story for children:

- After attending a Tamar Bible study facilitated by Prof. Gerald West I was inspired to develop the story to become child sensitive and child appropriate for the purpose of raising awareness among children as young as 3-5 who have increasingly become victims of rape and assault.
- I consulted with a worker in the Office of the Family Advocate who also served for 10 years in “Child Line” as a counsellor for children who have been raped or sexually abused in order to ensure suitability to children’s sensibilities and cognitive levels.





Telling the story



- The lessons of the story had to be extracted and decoded for the children.
- Questions were formed in order to ascertain the children's understanding of the story.
- An artist was commissioned in order to develop contemporary images of the characters.
- The story is long and detailed, it has a slow deliberate sequence of events. This had to be abridged in order not to confuse the children.
- Story tellers had to be brightly dressed, articulate, and dramatic.
- Use props such as dolls or pictures.
- Use ice breakers about right and wrong touching.
- Prepare the children for what they were about to hear.
- Remind them that there will be questions after the story.
- Proceed.

Introduction of the story

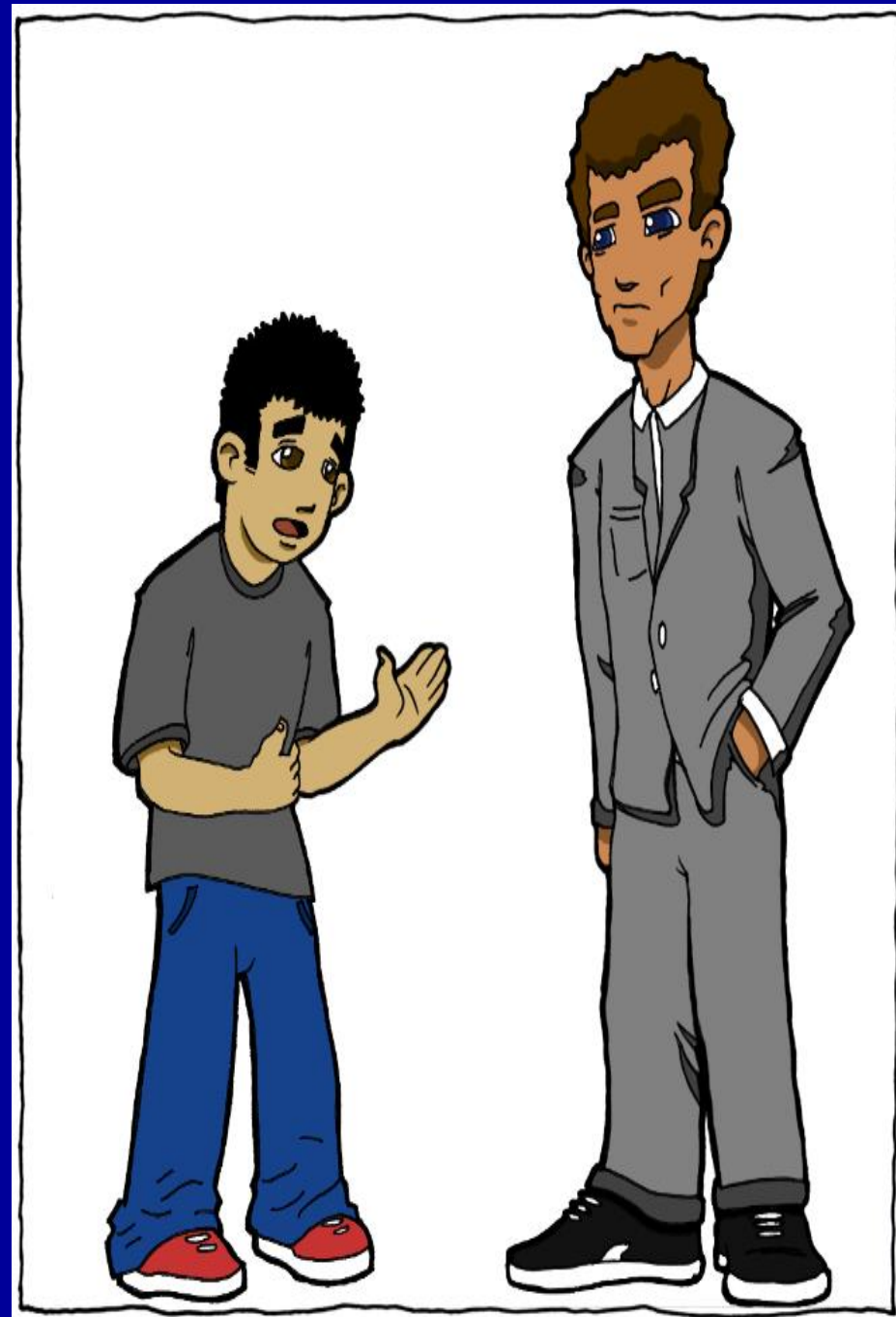
Long ago in the land of Israel, lived a king whose name was David. Now David had many children. This story is about three of his children Amnon, Tamar and Absalom.

One day Amnon was behaving as though he was sick and sad because he thought; he was in love with his sister Tamar. Amnon had a cousin by the name of Jonadab who was a very cunning, sly person. Jonadab asked Amnon: "You are the king's son, Amnon tell me why are you so sad and sick? Amnon answered, "I am in love with my sister Tamar!" so Jonadab said "lie down on your bed and pretend that you are sick when your father comes to see you tell him to send Tamar to cook some food and feed it to you"



So Amnon (pretending that he was very sick) asked his father David to send Tamar to cook for him.

(Children, how many of you have pretended to be sick when you did not want to go to somewhere or do something?)



King David sent Tamar to the house of Amnon to cook for him so that he will feel better.



Tamar obediently went to Amnon's house and baked cakes for him. When it was ready she put it in front of him to eat but he did not want to. Amnon then told Tamar to first send everyone out of the house. Everyone was sent out.



Amnon told Tamar to bring the cakes to the bedroom and Tamar obeyed. When she took the cakes to him he said “Sleep with me, my sister” (he wanted her to let him touch her private parts.)



She said “NO, my brother, do not make me do such a wrong thing; this is not done in our country. Do not do this shameful thing! I will be ashamed and you will be a fool. Ask the king for permission”.



Now, Amnon being stronger than her did not listen when she said NO, instead, he forced himself on her, touching and hurting her in her private parts.

After he did this terrible thing he hated her and sent her away. She begged him not to, but, he did not want to listen.



He told his servants to throw her out of the house and lock the door. Now Tamar was wearing a beautiful long dress that day, the servants threw her out. Tamar was so sad and hurt about what Amnon did to her body that she cried aloud and tore her beautiful dress.



When Absalom the other brother of Tamar saw her, he asked her not to cry aloud and kept her in his house.

When the king heard what Amnon did to Tamar he was very angry. Absalom did not speak to Amnon again. He hated him for what he did to Tamar.

So ends the sad story of Tamar.



Important Finding:

Children are powerful agents in the fight against gender violence and rape: They warn other children about dangers and tell their families what is acceptable touching and what is not.



Immediate plans

As the children's programme is being conducted all over the world the following has become necessary :

- Publish a facilitators guide and an instructional story book for parents/teachers to use with little children in 2008
- Continued training has also raised the need for the translation of the material into different languages.



Mission and Advocacy

- Its time to treat women and children with dignity and care as precious in God's sight.
- They are NOT sexual objects for the satisfaction of perverts!
- They are NOT “beasts of burden”!
- They are NOT unclean, unable or incapable: They are not inferior!
- Sexual violence and rape certainly does NOT happen only in South Africa! Across the world women and children experience **unspeakable cruelty** and **reprehensible acts** of sexual violence.
- The issue of gender violence is NOT about women vs. men, it is about **the fight for true humanity!**



Mission with children

- Children are important agents in mission
- As urbanisation continues unabated in many countries creating safe, nurturing environments for children should be a mission priority
- Do not underestimate the capacity of children for critical thinking
- Children can learn to question the actions of society and be powerful advocates of transformation
- Disseminate information about dangers to children to local communities (dealing with health care, gender violence, education, predator criminal activity etc.)



Church and Children



According to De Beer (2006:13) “children should be more central on the agenda of theological education and reflection”. De Beer asks the following essential question:

Why is it that so little is said or done about children by the most prominent theologians of our world? There is a theological silence that needs to be overcome. Pastors need to take the lead in placing children on congregational agendas and in integrating children meaningfully into worship services and other events of the church. They need to affirm childcare workers much more as key members of the ministry team. They need to invest in the development of effective and knowledgeable child care workers.” (2006:13)

Points to ponder for our planning



- The spiritual formation of children should not only include ritual observances like baptism and basic Sunday school.
- Contextualised programmes for children which are based on sound research need to be developed in consultation with child specialists, mission with children specialists and children themselves.
- Churches need to invest all types of resources in training and development for effective and efficient mission with children both in church and society.
- The Children should not just be relegated to a department, the child should not be treated as less important in the church but rather, as **crucial to the life, mission, present and future of the church.**

What you can do once you get home

- Gather information-media, social-offices, churches, child specialists
- Mobilize your family, neighborhood and church to:-
- Understand gender and sexuality in their own context
- Develop appropriate methods of informing children about sexuality, pilot study best practices
- Encourage youth to interrogate concepts of love, lust, sex, power
- Educate parents and community about children/youth perceptions
- Discern systems and powers that contribute to, and maintain unsafe environments for children
- Take back role of listeners, mentors and care-givers
- Actively support vulnerable households and individuals
- Become observant for signs of assault and abuse
- Campaign for children friendly neighborhoods and cities
- Reclaim dangerous spaces

The mission of the church must take seriously the plight of children...we can not continue to fail the children.
**LET US WORK TOWARDS MAKING OUR SOCIETIES SAFER
FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE....our children!**



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