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THE PROBLEM OF ABANDONMENT FOR THE FIRESIDE ENGAGEMENT

Tuesday 8 August 2017
Women's Prison, Constitution Hill

ABANDONMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: SOME IMPORTANT FACTS

- It is commonly cited that about 3500 children are abandoned annually (approximately 300 per month) but that figure only includes survivors. The total number of abandonments is far higher.
- Figures compiled in Gauteng show that for every abandoned child found alive, two are found dead.
- A recent Medical Research Council study on child homicide reveals that children in South Africa are at the highest risk of unnatural death in the first six days of life.
- Research shows that 65% of abandoned children are newborns, and 90% are under the age of one.
- A large number of babies have already survived a late-term abortion prior to being abandoned. 52-58% of South Africa's abortions are illegal (up to 150 000 per annum), and in Gauteng, studies indicate that up to half of these illegal abortions (which are seldom policed, and often unsuccessful) take place in the third trimester.
- 70% of abandonments are unsafe.
- Many abandoned babies are never found.
- Safe abandonment is illegal in South Africa so all of the country's baby safes operate unlawfully.
- Girls under the age of 18 can consent to an abortion, but cannot place a child for adoption without the consent of a parent or guardian.
- Foreigners fear deportation if they try to place a child for adoption. Others lack the formal documentation required to place their children into the child protection system.
- Abandonment is no longer listed as a violent crime in South Africa, or included in crime statistics. Nor is it listed as a cause of death in South African mortuaries. There is therefore no accurate tally of how many children die as a result of abandonment.
- To date, no formal research has been completed by the government to track abandonment, and no measures put in place to counter it.
- Studies show that abandonment most frequently results from desperation due to poverty and unemployment, the breakdown of the family, HIV/AIDS, cultural beliefs, rape, incest, "blessers or sugar daddies" and women themselves being abandoned by the child's father. Government policy is also a huge contributing factor, as is anti-adoption sentiment on the part of many nurses and officials.

In conclusion, endemic problems like poverty and abuse are hard to address, so child abandonment is likely to continue long-term. But, changes to government policy, such as lowering the age of consent for adoption placement, facilitating safe abandonment through the implementation of safe haven laws, and dealing with xenophobic policies regarding foreigners and barriers to adoption would definitely save lives; as would policing, especially of illegal abortion practitioners. In addition, research, and listing abandonment in crime and mortuary statistics could help to quantify and manage the problem. Finally, pregnancy initiatives are essential to support vulnerable women and lessen the risk of them making the tragic decision to abandon.

First published in the Daily Maverick, the article highlights the tragedy of illegal late term abortion and abandonment

A LETTER TO ABORTED TWINS

BY ROBYN WOLFSON VORSTER

To the aborted twins, we failed you because if you died in the womb, even on the cusp of birth, our law says you were not a person and that you have no legal rights. We failed you because if you were born alive, no one will ever know or care. Forensic pathology services will list you as a stillbirth, even though you took a breath, and the police will not classify you as a murder statistic or investigate your unnatural death.

Dear Innocents,

Today could have been your birthday. Instead it marks a month since your mother aborted you, placed you in a plastic bag, and left you under a “safe abortions” sign. Now I think about you every day. So many questions remain unanswered:

Why did your mother wait until she was eight months pregnant before deciding to end your lives?

What made her suddenly give up?

Did the abortion drug kill you? It doesn’t kill the majority of babies at such a late stage of development. Were you born alive?

Did she cry when she delivered you? What about when she put you in the plastic bag?

As your life ended, did it comfort you to feel your sister’s body next to yours as you had in the womb?

They are questions I will never be able to answer. What I do know is that we failed you. We failed you because we allowed your mother to live in poverty, desperation and violence. We failed you because we didn’t let her know that she had options: that she didn’t have to abort you, that there were arms aching to hold you—arms that ache still. We failed you because we have allowed the stigma of adoption to remain unchallenged. We failed you because your mother was not legally permitted to abandon you safely. We failed you because we didn’t police the people who illegally sold your mother the abortion drug, because they are allowed to carry out “safe abortions” with impunity—safe for whom, I ask?

We failed you because if you died in the womb (even on the cusp of birth), our law says you were not a person and that you have no legal rights. We failed you because if you were born alive no one will ever know or care: forensic pathology services will list you as a “stillbirth” even though you took a breath, and the police will not classify you as a murder statistic or investigate your “unnatural death”.

We failed you because no one will be prosecuted for your death: not your mother (if she is charged at all, it will only be for concealment of birth and so far, only one person has been prosecuted for that crime), nor the abortion practitioners. In our law, they are guilty of illegally dispensing medicine, not, apparently, for your death. Above all, we failed you because our government, tasked with your care, turned a blind eye to illegal abortion and abandonment, and does so still.

Dear innocents, we failed you and nothing we do can bring you back. But, your deaths did not pass unnoticed little ones. We cannot continue to fail the many others that will follow after you. Next time we must do better. If so, maybe your appalling and senseless deaths will finally have some meaning.

TOPIC ONE

CRISIS AND TEEN PREGNANCY: HOW TO UPHOLD THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE WOMEN

Facilitator: Dr Busi Mkwanzani: Researcher and expert on teen pregnancy

Facts about teen pregnancy:

- Teenage pregnancies result in 80,000 unplanned babies annually.
- More than 179 000 teenagers were pregnant in 2013, of these girls, 2903 were only 13 years old.
- In South Africa, 30% of females will have experienced a teen pregnancy by the age of 20.
- The phenomenon has adverse health, social and economic consequences for both mother and child making it a critical issue requiring urgent address.
- Research shows that incidence of pregnancy among 15-19 year olds is 15 times higher than that of 12-14 year olds. For women aged between 15 and 19, statistics show that there are 50 births per 1000 women.
- Girls under 18 may consent to an abortion without the consent of a parent or guardian. However, they may not place a child for adoption until they are 18.
- The impact of a teen pregnancy:
 - On the teenage mother include morbidity, mortality and low future prospects.
 - On the children include poorer health, social and economic outcomes.

Factors resulting in a teen pregnancy include:

- Low education levels & low socio-economic status
- Household (HH) factors—including large household size and low household socioeconomic status
- Community factors including culture, gender inequality and stereotyping.

Recommendations for all crisis pregnancies:

- Sex education coupled with contraceptive availability.
- Sensitivity of nurses at clinics to support young women with contraceptives and option counselling.
- Option counselling support.

Recommendations re teen pregnancies:

- Teenage pregnancy prevention programmes need to target girls at younger ages. Such programmes should preferably occur at the primary school level and aim to empower and assist younger females to curb all forms of infringement on their sexual and reproductive health rights.
- Programmes need to be set up for children growing up without one or both parents to ensure father and mother figures are present in such children's lives, and if absent, paired up with screened suitable "substitute" parent figures. The "substitute" parent would act as a source of support, love, validation and encouragement to decrease a girl-child's vulnerability of idealising older 'father-figure' partners, and to lower her predisposition to delinquency during adolescence.
- Service inaccessibility is closely linked to teen pregnancy. Using service inaccessibility results, we can identify areas that are more prone to teenage pregnancy and ensure that they are targeted for intervention programs against this phenomenon. Programmes need to focus on the provision of basic service and poverty alleviation to ensure any risk due to low socio-economic status is eradicated.
- Results on community unemployment highlight the need of creative ways to monitor and supervise children, especially during adolescence. It is imperative that government and NGOs begin supervised after-school programmes for learners up to the matriculation year. These programmes could ensure that children are assisted with homework, encouraged to play sports and exposed to extra-curricular activities such as drama, ballroom dancing, chess, debating clubs, calligraphy, arts and crafts, flower arranging, interior designing, event decor, computer skills, musical instrument training, ballet, cultural dancing, etc. These activities would be most beneficial in environments where teens lack recreation halls, public sports facilities and other resources. Unemployed members of the public could be trained and employed to facilitate in such centres decreasing the problem of youth loitering as well as creating employment.

Questions:

1. What programmes could be set up to decrease levels of vulnerability among women?
2. How could business and government work together to combat the contextual factors associated with crisis and teenage pregnancy?
3. How can awareness and education campaigns be supported and made relevant?
4. Which policies need greater reinforcement to uphold the sexual and reproductive health rights of women?
5. How could the private sector and government assist further in financing research for this critical area?

TOPIC TWO

ILLEGAL LATE ABORTION: MANAGING THE PROBLEM AND POLICING THE PRACTITIONERS

Facilitator: Robyn Wolfson Vorster: Child Protection Advocate and Journalist

Key facts about illegal late term abortion:

- According to Marie Stopes, between 52-58% of South Africa's abortions are illegal (up to 150 000 per annum).
- Research carried out in Gauteng indicates to up to half of these abortions take place in the third trimester when the baby is already viable.
- Illegal abortion practitioners are usually criminals who illegally provide drugs like Cytotec (a schedule 4 drug used for the treatment of ulcers, but with a known side effect of producing uterine cramps) to bring on premature labour (or in less sophisticated areas, make women drink chemicals).
- Abortion practitioners do not verify the age of the foetus, nor is the viability of the foetus a consideration to their sale of the drugs. Some practitioners even advertise that they offer the service to women who are up to 38 weeks pregnant.
- Women are instructed to take the drugs (orally or vaginally) and then faint a miscarriage at a local hospital. They are sometimes told that the baby "will dissolve" or be "flushed away".
- Babies often survive the abortion process. They are born alive, only to be abandoned; or to die from prematurity, the effects of the abortion drugs or even from murder at the hands of shocked and desperate mothers (or family members), appalled at being faced with a living baby.
- Babies that survive a late term abortion often experience serious psychological and physical challenges, learning difficulties and behavioural problems, as well as chronic conditions like cerebral palsy and ADHD. One of the babies recently placed at Door of Hope weighs only 830g.
- While many of these children are adopted (usually overseas where families are more open to adopting a disabled child), those that remain often spend their childhood in Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCCs) at great expense to the CYCC and government.

The law and illegal late term abortion:

- According to the law, a baby is only alive if it has been born and taken a breath. For this reason, if a mother aborts her baby (even the day before it is due to be born), her crime is a violation of the Termination of Pregnancy Act. If that same mother kills her baby after it has been born and has taken a breath, she may be charged with murder.
- Illegal abortion practitioners cannot be policed unless the police receive a complaint.
- If illegal abortion practitioners are policed, it is only for violating the Termination or Pregnancy Act or for the crime of illegally dispensing medicine. But, the Department of Health has no jurisdiction over these practitioners because they are not licenced to dispense medicine.
- If illegal abortion practitioners are caught and prosecuted under the Termination of Pregnancy Act, the maximum sentence is 10 years imprisonment.

Questions:

1. Why do you think illegal abortion is such a problem in this country?
2. Whose responsibility should it be to prevent or police them?
3. What can the following groups do to prevent or police the problem:
 - Government (who and what)?
 - SAPS
 - Legislators
4. Is there a role for business in finding and maintaining a solution?
5. Is there a role for business in caring for the survivors?
6. Will policing illegal abortion practitioners lead to increased abandonment?

TOPIC THREE

VIOLENCE, GENDER AND THE ECONOMY

Facilitators: Lisa Vetten: Mellon Doctoral Fellow of the Wits City Institute, University of the Witwatersrand
& Dr Zubeda Dangor, the Director of the Nisaa Institute for Women's Development

Facts about gender violence:

- Violence is gendered – meaning that men and women do not experience the same forms of violence, or perpetrate it at the same rates.
- Domestic violence is the most common form of violence experienced by South African women, while most forms of sexual violence are also far more likely to be experienced by women rather than men.
- The gendered structure of South Africa's economy plays a role in women's experience of violence, as well as their access to helping resources.
- Data from a soon-to-be-released national study of reported rape estimated that 60% of adult complainants were unemployed. This is double the proportion of unemployed women recorded by the census in 2011 (29.8%).
- Like elsewhere in the world, South African women earn less than their male counterparts, as well as having higher rates of unemployment. These gendered features of the economy place women in structural relations of economic dependency upon men; being in a relationship can be as much a matter economic necessity, as it is of romantic choice. But this dependency makes women vulnerable to abuse and entraps them in abusive relationships.
- Workplaces need to attend to domestic violence. It affects women's ability to work because they may require time off to attend legal proceedings, or their work may even be sabotaged by their partners. Colleagues can also be threatened by the abusive partner. Violence against women thus entails costs to the economy.
- Domestic violence is implicated in women's homelessness in at least two ways: they may be made homeless to escape violence; and, if homeless, may be forced to enter into violent relationships in order to obtain somewhere to sleep. Policy in this regard is currently not adequate and does not recognise or address the relationship between housing and domestic violence.
- Domestic violence shelters are not adequately supported, including their programmes intended to support women's economic dependence. The corporate sector is playing a minimal role in addressing this.

Recommendations / Key questions for discussion:

1. We invite SheEOs to undertake a SleepOut™ at every shelter in the country. This would give them a chance to meet women and staff and understand what is needed to support women to leave abusive relationships, as well as how to keep shelters running effectively.
2. We invite SheEOs to help develop the role of the corporate sector in addressing domestic violence. What could they offer in terms of training, learnerships/internships and opportunities to gain work experience? Very little CSI finds its way to initiatives addressing violence against women. How can this be changed?
3. What needs to be done to ensure that decision-makers understand that domestic violence is a housing issue that requires recognition in housing policy?

TOPIC FOUR

FOREIGN AND UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN AND MOTHERS, AND THEIR RIGHT TO SUPPORT

Facilitator: Talia Magnes: Social Worker Impilo

Facts about foreign or undocumented mothers and children:

- In South Africa, there are a high number of children and mothers who are undocumented/foreign. Authorities have no idea how many, but it is already considered a national crisis (at a recent conference on Undocumented Children, the MEC for Social Development in Gauteng described the problem as a humanitarian emergency).
- These numbers are placing strain on the child protection system.
- The system is not acknowledging the problem and is punitive: Home Affairs' solution is arrest and deportation.
- These children and their mothers have no access to basic services and resources such as education, health, legal system and social grants, although many of these rights are guaranteed under the constitution and the Children's Act.
- Undocumented or foreign children and mothers do not know their rights.
- Many foreign mothers are not able to safely place their children into the child protection system because they don't have a valid form of identification.
- Fear of being arrested and deported results in some foreign mothers believing that their only option is to abandon their child (often anonymously and unsafely).
- No formal statistics are available to show why women have abandoned their children, but the perception amongst some government officials that all abandoned babies are foreign is untrue.
- Children born to foreign mothers (regardless of if they were born in South Africa, and often regardless of if the father is South African) are deemed to be foreign, and issued with handwritten birth certificates. This means that they cannot be adopted in South Africa.

Recommendations:

- Linking our responsibilities to the UN/UNICEF/AU and SA rights and constitutional responsibilities. That is, to place children into families, rather than children's homes.

Questions:

1. What can the following do to lessen the problem of foreign / undocumented mothers and children:
 - Government (who and what)
 - Business and civil society
 - Legislators
2. What options can be provided to foreign mothers who are not able to raise their children?
3. Should foreign women whose children are born in South Africa be allowed to place their children for adoption in this country? Why or why not?

TOPIC FIVE

UNSAFE ABANDONMENT AND THE NEED FOR A SAFE HAVEN LAW

Facilitators: Whitney Rosenberg: Law lecturer and doctoral student in child abandonment
& Nadine Grabham: Operations Director Door of Hope Baby Home

Facts about abandonment and the need for safe abandonment:

- It is commonly cited that about 3500 children are abandoned annually (approximately 300 per month), but that figure only includes survivors. The total number of abandonments is far higher.
- Estimates are for every abandoned baby that survives, two die. In other words, two of every three abandoned babies die.
- For this reason, a recent Medical Research Council study on child homicide reveals that children in South Africa are at the highest risk of unnatural death in the first six days of life.
- Research shows that 65% of abandoned children are newborns, and 90% are under the age of one.
- 70% of babies are abandoned in unsafe sites including, toilets, drains, gutters, refuse bins, rubbish dumps, and open veld.
- Many abandoned babies are never found.
- Safe abandonment is illegal in South Africa, so all of the country's baby safes operate unlawfully.
- Recent cases involving a mother abandoning her child in a taxi and another placing a child outside of a Place of Safety have resulted in criminal investigations. In the case of the mother from the taxi, charges were laid and she appeared in court. CCTV footage of mother safely abandoning her child outside a place of safety resulted in her image being published on the pink ladies missing persons alert and in the police distributing her picture.
- By contrast, women who abandon unsafely are very seldom prosecuted. If they are prosecuted, it is usually for concealment of birth not for attempted murder or murder.
- Authorities are unwilling to allow safe abandonment because of the loss of culture and because they are concerned that it will encourage greater numbers of women to abandon.
- However, researchers in South Africa argue that the opposite of safe abandonment is unsafe abandonment, not no abandonment.

Legislation governing abandonment:

- The current Children's Act of 2005, section 305, which deals with offences, states that the parent, guardian or other person having parental rights and responsibilities, care-giver, or person who voluntarily cares for a child whether indefinitely, temporarily or partially is guilty of an offence if that parent or care-giver or other person —subsection (3)(b)— abandons the child. Furthermore, this person may be held liable as expressed in subsection (6) and (7) to a fine or imprisonment not exceeding ten or 20 years respectively or to both a fine and imprisonment.
- The crime of abandonment is also mentioned in the General Law Amendment Act 46 of 1935, section 113 (as amended by the Judicial Matters Amendment Act of 2008) defines the disposing of the body of a newborn, even though it is not proven that the child in question died before its body was disposed of, as the crime of concealment of birth. Mothers face conviction of a fine or imprisonment not exceeding three years.
- Section 233(1) of the Children's Act provides that a child may be adopted only if consent for the adoption has been given by-
 - o (a) each parent of the child, regardless of whether the parents are married or not: Provided that, if the parent is a child, that parent is assisted by his or her guardian.
- As opposed to section 5 of the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act which allows a minor to get an abortion without the consent of her parents or guardian.

TOPIC FIVE

UNSAFE ABANDONMENT AND THE NEED FOR A SAFE HAVEN LAW

Facilitators: Whitney Rosenberg: Law lecturer and doctoral student in child abandonment
& Nadine Grabham: Operations Director Door of Hope Baby Home

Across the globe:

- Rulings from cases across the world have established that the right to life takes precedence over the right to identity.
 - o Fixating exclusively on respecting the right of the child to know his or her parents without considering the circumstances will lead to violation of the right to life.
 - o If the child cannot survive then the right to know his or her origins can neither be claimed nor protected.
 - o Baby hatches give children the right to life and for newborns, survival is more important than the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.
 - o In principle, the right of a child to know his or her origins should be given a higher priority than the parent's right to anonymity. However, where disclosing the parent's identity could lead to abortion, infanticide or unsafe abandonment, the parent's anonymity should be upheld.
- Safe haven laws that have been adopted in other countries allow women to abandon a child safely and anonymously, in particular in safe spaces like hospitals or police stations. The child can be placed into care, and there is no risk of prosecution for the mother.
 - o USA safe haven laws
Child protection advocates recommend that South Africa institute safe haven laws to lessen the number of children dying as a result of unsafe abandonment.

Questions:

1. What are the solutions to child abandonment in South Africa?
2. Should South Africa enact safe haven laws similar to other countries?
3. Does an abandoned child have the right to know his or her biological origins?
4. Would safe haven laws decrease the number of unsafe abandonments?
5. Rulings from cases across the world have established that the right to life takes precedence over the right to identity. Will this ever be accepted in South Africa?
6. If not, what can we do to ensure that babies who are abandoned safely can still access information about their birth families?
7. Do baby bins encourage women to abandon their babies? In other words, if safe abandonment becomes legal, will the number of abandonments increase?

TOPIC SIX

HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADOPTION AS A CHILD PROTECTION STRATEGY

Facilitator: Sue Krawitz: Director Impilo Child Protection & Adoption Services, Vice Chair National Adoption Coalition

Facts about adoption:

- South Africa has 3 million orphans, of which up to 1.2 million are maternal or double orphans.
- In addition, women in the country experience tens of thousands of crisis pregnancies annually. In many instances, the mothers are not able to raise their babies.
- At any given time, there are about 550 children registered on the Register of Adoptable Children and Parents (RACAP) and awaiting adoption.
- Estimates are that there are 21,000 children living in 355 registered Child and Youth Care Centres across South Africa and about 2,000 living in 115 unregistered ones.
- Despite this need, adoption numbers declined by 50%, from 2840 to 1448, between 2004 and 2014.
- In 2016, only 1165 adoptions took place, a further 30% drop from 2014.
- Up to 80% of those 1165 adoptions in 2016 were probably family adoptions (meaning that less than 300 were unrelated adoptions).
- In Kwa-Zulu Natal (the province with the largest number of orphans), only 8 adoptions took place in 2016.

When faced with these challenges, the National Adoption Coalition of South Africa would like to achieve the following:

- Inter sectoral collaboration to streamline the adoption process and to develop a better synergy in the collaboration, that will prevent unnecessary delays, stumbling blocks etc. (DHA, Justice, Social Development etc).
- Collaboration between DSD and adoption community to raise awareness, to dialogue, debate and develop better insight into children's needs to permanency, importance of early attachment, culture and so forth.
- The establishment of programmes that will ensure the fastest and most efficient referral of potentially adoptable children (young, orphaned and abandoned) to relevant practitioners, to prevent that these children end up in child protection system for lengthy periods.
- Specialised and standardised training of social workers in this field.
- Political will and commitment to acknowledge the importance of adoption as a form of alternative family care and as an integrated part of child protection.
- Post adoption support for adoptive parents, birth mothers and children.

Questions:

1. Given that adoption is an integral part of the child protection system in South Africa, why do you think adoption numbers are so low?
2. What are the cultural issues in South Africa that affect adoption and how does unbuntu play itself out with regard to adoption?
3. What can be done to rectify the problem?
4. How do we create ownership of the adoption process and outcome by South Africans of all races?
5. How can adoption contribute to the future of our country? What is the impact on our country be if adoption is no longer part of our child protection system?
6. How can business:
 - o Support adoption as a solution for the children of our country who are abandoned or need permanent homes
 - o Assist with promoting the agenda of the adoption community.

PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

Dr Sibusiso Mkwanzani

Dr Busi Mkwanzani is an associate lecturer and PhD student within the Demography and Population Studies Programme. She is a qualified dentist and holds a Masters in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from the University of the Witwatersrand. Busi's PhD research investigates social disorganisation-rooted contextual factors associated with teenage pregnancy in South Africa. Her other research interests include sexual and reproductive health, youth-related studies and development. She is a current fellow of the South African Humanities Deans' Association (SAHUDA) and a previous recipient of the National Research Foundation Innovation and Scarce Skills Fellowship, Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Foundation and Wits University Postgraduate Merit Scholarships. Busi desires to contribute to the development of third world nations, especially in Africa through pioneering research. She enjoys travelling, listening to music and reading.

Robyn Wolfson Vorster

Robyn has degrees in Social Sciences and Human Resource Development. A specialist in written and verbal communications (including training and facilitation) she spent fifteen years consulting in strategic business development and managing the implementation of solutions in the corporate sector and government. In 2012, after adopting her daughter, she left the corporate sector to focus on child protection and adoption advocacy. She now specialises in researching, speaking and writing about child protection and advocating for changes to legislation and policy. Robyn has written extensively about adoption, abandonment, late term abortion, child homicide, the challenges experienced by foreigners and the crisis in welfare NGOs, for the Daily Maverick and other publications, including the Business Day. She also provides expert input on the topics for television and radio.

Robyn lives in Johannesburg with her husband and two beautiful children, Luke (10) and Asha (5). In her spare time, she likes to read, take photographs and tell stories to children.

Lisa Vetten

Lisa Vetten began working as a lay counsellor for People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) in 1991. Since then she has accumulated extensive counselling, para-legal and training experience in the field of violence against women, as well as undertaken a range of studies on the topic. She has compiled numerous submissions around law and policy applicable to violence against women and engaged with parliament in this regard. In 2005, she formed part of the UN Expert Group's Meeting on Good practices in combating and eliminating violence against women. She has also worked as a technical adviser to various government departments on the development of policy addressing violence against women, including the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and the Civilian Secretariat for Police (CSP). She currently acts on a part-time basis as the Technical Assistant to the Higher Education AIDS (HEAIDS) programme of the Department of Higher Education and Training, and is tasked with drafting a national policy framework to address gender-based violence in the post-school sector. Between 2013 and 2015 she was a gender specialist on violence against women appointed to the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) in terms of section 6 of the CGE Act.

She has a Master's degree in Political Studies from the University of the Witwatersrand (cum laude) focusing on legislation and policy addressing domestic violence. Her dissertation has been accepted for publication as a book by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Press. She is currently a PhD candidate in the Psychology department at the same university.

Her doctorate aims to provide a critical history of responses to rape in South Africa from 1976 onward. Ms Vetten's research has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as South African Crime Quarterly, Gender and Development, BMC Women's Health, Agenda, Feminism and Psychology, the South African Journal of Human Rights and PLoS Medicine.

Ms Vetten is a Mellon Doctoral Fellow of the Wits City Institute based at the University of the Witwatersrand.

PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

Dr Zubeda Dangor

Zubeda Dangor is the executive director of the Nisaa Institute of Women's Development and has worked extensively in the field of gender violence. Zubeda has served on the editorial boards of Lola Press an international women's magazine as well as the Women's Health Project Book and Reclaiming Women's Spaces, a Nisaa publication. She has been instrumental in establishing two shelters for women and children affected by gender violence. She was also instrumental in initiating the National Shelter Movement and now serves on the executive of the National Shelter Movement. She has taught a course on gender violence and community development for Masters students at the University of Johannesburg. In addition, she has conducted extensive training on gender and gender violence and continues to offer consulting services on gender, gender violence and organizational development.

Dr. Dangor is a clinical psychologist with a Phd in Psychology; her Phd thesis has been published into a book entitled Life After Abuse: An Exploration of Women's Strategies for Overcoming Abuse. She received a post graduate scholarship through the Institute for International Education to study at the University of Notre Dame in the United States.

In 2006, she received an international Community Service award from South African Women for Women based in Toronto, Canada. In 2016, she received an award from the SBSM school in Lenasia for outstanding service to the community.

Whitney Rosenberg

Whitney Rosenberg completed her LLB degree in 2010 and went on to complete her Masters degree in contractual law in 2011. She is an admitted attorney of the High Court of South Africa. She has since gone on to pursue her doctorate in the laws regulating infant abandonment and the investigation to a safe alternative to unsafe abandonment. This topic is very close to her heart. She is a lecturer of 'law of persons and the family' at the University of Johannesburg and was promoted to this subject after having lectured Commercial Law for 2 years. Whitney is also a youth leader in her community and chairs as Secretary on her church board. She has obtained a Goethe Institute certificate for German A level language proficiency. She is married to her loving husband of 5 years who owns a marketing agency in Johannesburg. Whitney is also an animal lover and mom to two pups. She loves to travel and enjoys the outdoors.

Nadene Grabham

Nadene Grabham has a background in finance. She worked as a forex dealer on the dealing floor for Standard Corporate and Investment Banking for 20 years. Her clients included large corporates like MTN, Barlows and AECI. In 2011, she joined Door of Hope as a volunteer. In July of the same year, she was offered a permanent position as Baby Home Manager. She was then promoted to General Manager and in 2016, became the Operations Director of the organisation. Nadene's work is diverse, including spending hours in Emergency in Government hospitals taking care of sick and dying abandoned babies. She has assisted with the preparation of many adoptions and now oversees the day to day running of Door of Hope's three Baby Homes and caring for the health and development of all of the organisation's babies.

Sue Krawitz

Susan Krawitz graduated from University of the Witwatersrand 1982 with a BA Hons Social Work. She has worked in the field of adoption since 1988. She initially worked as an adoption social worker in private practice before founding Impilo Child Protection and Adoption Services in 2003. She is both the Founding Member and Director. She has been involved with South African Association of Social Worker's in Private practice and served on the board. She is also a Founding Member of The National Adoption Coalition. She has served as the Chairperson and is currently the vice chair. Sue is passionate about all aspects of adoption.
