

Can we afford to be acting so slowly?

 By [Marc Lubner](#)

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16 Days of Activism is an annual [international awareness campaign](#) that starts on 25 November and ends on 10 December, which is also Human Rights Day. Launched in 1991, the campaign has garnered more and more support year-on-year over the past 28 years.



Around the world violent crimes are classed as a human rights violation and a barrier to social, political and economic participation. The horrific stories of violence and brutality perpetrated against women and children in South Africa this year has left the nation trembling and brings to light how little is actually being done to safeguard the most vulnerable of our communities.

Strategic, sustainable change

In 1996 South Africa adopted the Constitution and 23 years later, we still aren't protecting the rights of children adequately as per Section 28. Furthermore, in August this year the first draft of the National Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Strategic Plan was released for public comment, nine months after the National Summit on GBV and Femicide was convened.

We understand that strategic and sustainable change takes time. However, while plans are formulated, reviewed and revised, women and children continue to be victims of violence.

In 2018, the Global Peace Index ranked South Africa 125 of 163 countries in terms of their levels of peacefulness. By 2019, South Africa had dropped two spots in only twelve months, ranking 127. This same 2019 index reported the economic cost of violence to the country to be 13% of our overall GDP. In our current financial climate and with South Africa already moving towards junk status on international credit rating reports, can we afford to be acting so slowly?

More important than the economic impact, we should be asking ourselves what we are teaching the future generation with such extreme violence.



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Joanne van der Walt 26 Nov 2019



Action drives change

In addition to 16 Days of Activism and Human Rights Day the country marks occasions such as Child Protection Week and Women's Day annually, which increases awareness of the problem. However, awareness alone cannot create change; actions create change. With this kind of behaviour rife in the country we should be highlighting and actioning the intentions of these short-lived marked occurrences 365 days of the year and strengthening our prevention efforts.

The next big question should be 'what are we to do'?

Here are three key actions:

- Make gender equality a norm at work, home and in social settings. Equality must be a lived experience, from a personal empowerment perspective to championing for issues affecting women that should be considered during policy formulation, planning and implementation
- Have the difficult conversations. Further, bringing young boys and men into these conversations is a critical element in the fight against GBV and IPV.
- Prioritise violence prevention at home and in schools. Teaching children from a young age that violence is not the answer is essential. We should be teaching them that to speak out and stand against it improves their outlook for the future. Set a good example by showing children how to change their behaviour. Teach them about personal accountability by letting them know their responsibilities. Restrict mindless activities in front of the TV, on digital and social media - instead spend quality time with them and start instilling good values.

This crisis needs both a prevention and cure. It must be a priority for everyone in South Africa. Before it's too late, we need to begin the process of establishing constructive individual thought and behaviour patterns for ourselves and the youth of today - the leaders of tomorrow.

ABOUT MARC LUBNER

Marc Lubner is CEO of Afrika Tikkun, a South African non-profit organisation focusing on youth development from cradle to career. He is also founder and executive chairman of the Smile Foundation, which treats children with facial abnormalities. He has held numerous positions at other noteworthy philanthropic and business organisations, including current executive chair of the SA Israel Chamber of Commerce.

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