



CREATING  
CONVERSATIONS  
ON GENDER JUST  
COMMUNITIES

Reflections from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's  
Gender Dialogues in South Africa







The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) was launched in the year 2000, after South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The aim was to ensure that lessons learnt from South Africa’s transition from apartheid to democracy were taken into account as the nation moved ahead. Today, the Institute helps to build fair, democratic and inclusive societies in Africa through carefully selected engagements and interventions.

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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .....	4
Foreword .....	5
Introduction .....	7
South Africa’s current gender injustice reality .....	8
Theoretical framing informing GJR interventions .....	10
Methodology, process and participants .....	12
a. The methodology informing GJR dialogues .....	12
b. Geographic localities .....	12
c. Participants .....	14
d. The 3-step process framing gender dialogical interventions .....	15
Three-step process in GJR dialogical interventions: results and outcomes .....	18
Step 1: Understanding gender and sexuality .....	18
i. Communities reached .....	18
ii. Main outcomes .....	18
iii. The main themes that emerged from step 1 .....	20
Step 2: My gender story .....	21
i. Communities Reached .....	21
ii. Main Outcomes .....	21
iii. The main themes that emerged from the step 2 .....	23
Step 3: Re-imagining gender justice and reconciliation .....	24
i. Communities reached .....	24
ii. Main Outcomes .....	24
Part 1: Gender Justice .....	24
Part 2: Re-imagining gender justice .....	27
Conclusion .....	32
Challenges and lessons learnt .....	32
Next steps .....	33
References .....	34
Appendix: Gender Justice and Reconciliation films, publications and opinion pieces .....	35

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Deep thanks and gratitude to our donors who make our work possible.



## FOREWORD

It is a pleasure to share with the public our first round of findings and reflections from IJR's new gender justice and reconciliation project (GJR) that was launched in early 2015. GJR owes its beginnings to IJR's in-house gender working group - a volunteer group within the institute that started in 2013. The group sought to strengthen the Institute's gender work and gender framing as well as develop a deeper understanding on the nexus between gender justice and reconciliation. In 2015 we were able to put our ideas into action and the first gender desk at IJR was born.

At the beginning of this project, we consulted with leading experts in the gender justice field such as civil society organizations, government departments, academics, activists and Chapter Nine institutions. We deliberated on reconciliation and gender literature and held initial consultative meetings with community leaders and stakeholder groups to ascertain how we as an organization should engage in gender justice and reconciliation and what our unique contribution would be. Once we had our initial ideas we set out on our series of workshops and dialogues with the goal to answer a few core questions and test out various methodologies.

South Africa is well-equipped with progressive policies and laws protecting gender rights, yet local level gender justice is far from realized. We must continue to ask: what are the root causes of gender injustice? In this light, the goal of these dialogues were to ask, how do South Africans define gender justice? And, if South Africans were to be given platforms and safer spaces to talk about gender on their own terms, in unmediated ways, would we develop a path to gender justice that is truly context specific and representative of people's needs? Given that a lot of gender justice work has focussed on women only, how can we create spaces that are immediately inclusive from the start of all identities? Including LGBTIQ+<sup>1</sup> persons who can be side-lined in gender justice work. And with this in mind how do we challenge people to challenge discrimination and think critically about gender as a social construct? And lastly, gender injustice in South Africa is deeply linked to the legacy of apartheid and structural inequality. How do we create spaces that give people the opportunity to interrogate their spaces and its effect on safety?

In South Africa's transition as a country we did not adequately address the root causes of gender injustice. We did not dismantle patriarchy nor reimagine a gender-just nation. The reconciliation project has mostly ignored the war on women's bodies. The nexus between gender justice and reconciliation means that there is no justice and reconciliation without gender justice. If we don't apply a gender lens to any peace-building, community led reconciliation and mechanisms for justice we only further entrench violence and structural oppression against women, LGBTIQ+ persons and reinforce violent masculinities. If rebuilding the nation is reimagining a better, more just society, then we must prioritise the creation of a gender-healed nation.

This report brings together the work of IJR that took place from early 2015 to December 2016 working across different contexts and with different interest groups. It is a critical reflection of our piloting of methodologies and dialogue questions. We hope you can read and share with us your thoughts and insights as we strive to continue to shape and strengthen our gender work at the Institute.

This publication is dedicated to every victim and survivor of gender-based violence, including those who identify as LGBTIQ+.

**Leila Emdon Project Leader, Gender Justice and Reconciliation  
Institute for Justice and Reconciliation**

<sup>1</sup> The full acronym is LGBTQQIAAP (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, ally, pansexual), however, this document acknowledged the gender spectrum by abbreviating as LGBTIQ with a + at the end to signify the multiple identities and sexualities in our society.





## GJR VISION

Contributing to an inclusive, just & equal gender mind-set informing overall justice & reconciliation in South Africa.



## OBJECTIVES

- Address systemic & root causes of gender-based violence and gender injustice in South Africa.
- Provide tools and creating opportunities to reconcile gender divides & challenge internalised gender stereotypes.
- Create safe spaces for gender stories to be told on their own terms to reimagine gender relations.
- Challenge & disrupt gender injustice through knowledge transfer and policy influence.
- To create sustainable post-intervention gender reconciliation by people in their own communities & spheres of influence.

## INTRODUCTION

The Gender Justice & Reconciliation (GJR) project, housed in the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's (IJR) Building Inclusive Societies (BIS) programme, is a key initiative contributing to gender discourse, empowerment, skills and knowledge, capacity building and engagement in the South African healing and reconciliation space. Evidence shows that deep gender wounds and divides are pervasive throughout South Africa.<sup>2</sup> These gender wounds and associated trauma serve to further entrench divisions in communities and between individuals, making peace building efforts within the self and community more challenging.

The GJR creates platforms, offers training and gives support for people who are already active in their communities to share knowledge and tools for efficacy through becoming empowered agents of change in their communities and spheres of influence. Without gender justice, attempts at broader justice and reconciliation are incomplete, serving only to uphold traditional patriarchal structural division in society that so often become weaponised to inflict harm.<sup>3</sup> Gender injustices, sexual assaults and other violence, abuse, and marginalisation of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ persons perpetuate cycles of harm, and has a potent ability to have traumatic effects for generations to come.

But at IJR, the GJR initiative does not only work with the marginalised or oppressed in safe spaces on topics of gender equality and gender justice. Our interventions purposely go beyond this paradigm of women's empowerment to include men in our dialogical interventions to talk about masculinity and patriarchy, and how society harms or helps men in framing their identity as it relates to the other – women, girls and LGBTIQ+. This framing serves to focus GJR work at the root of gender and related oppression:

- Structural inequality that is discriminatory and patriarchal must be confronted to enable women and marginalised groups to have independence, exercise options and access justice.
- Internalised ideas of gender, patriarchy, sexism and misogyny need to be surfaced, debated, understood and shifted toward equality so that gender reconciliation within the self and between individuals and groups can occur.

To address these root causes, the GJR Project conducted 20 dialogues in five provinces in South Africa between May 2015 and December 2016 respectively. Based on these dialogues, this report covers:

1. A brief snapshot of the current gender (in) justice context in South Africa.
2. Locating GJR interventions in a theoretical framework that informs our work, design and approach to dialogue engagement, describing some of the terms used and how they have been operationalised in our work, grounding this report in the specific contextual meanings created in each discourse and conversation held by GJR.
3. Methodology, process and participants:
  - a) reflecting on the thinking behind the approaches deployed as explanatory rationale for the process informing dialogues
  - b) Selecting geographies
  - c) A description of the participants engaged and the rationale for their selection
4. Results and outcomes of dialogical interventions in the three-step process used by GJR. The outcomes reflected offer a snapshot of the many dialogues and processes undertaken, from each step examples are given on the outcomes and themes emerged from the dialogues.
5. We conclude our findings by reflecting on lessons learnt, challenges that remain to be overcome and identifying the next steps.

<sup>2</sup> Despite progressive laws, gender-based violence remains 'pervasive' in South Africa, UN expert warns. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/despite-progressive-laws-gender-based-violence-pervasive-in-south-africa-un-expert-warns/>

<sup>3</sup> See Scanlon, H. 2016 "Gender and the Politics of Reconciliation", published by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation on a detailed critical analysis of gender and transitional justice. [http://ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Gender-and-the-Politics-of-Reconciliation\\_Helen-Scanlon\\_2016.pdf](http://ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Gender-and-the-Politics-of-Reconciliation_Helen-Scanlon_2016.pdf)

## SOUTH AFRICA'S CURRENT GENDER INJUSTICE REALITY

*“The violence inherited from apartheid still resonates profoundly in today’s South African society dominated by deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes towards the role of women in society which makes violence against women and children an almost accepted social phenomenon.”*

- Dubravka Šimonovic, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women

South Africa faces a gender crisis of extraordinary proportions despite having some of the most progressive laws and policies to deal with gender justice. This stems from a lack of implementation in a society rooted in a still very patriarchal values, resulting in systemic violation of women’s human rights in the form of rapes and gang rapes, femicide, spousal/partner abuse & domestic violence, gender-related killings and murders, forced marriages and other forms of harm. These harmful acts are then compounded by secondary traumatising and victimisation in the shape of insensitive police and healthcare workers all the way through the justice system; an entire system unwelcoming and unsensitised to issues that impact gender justice.

South Africa currently has a femicide rate five times higher than the global average. Globally, while men are overwhelmingly the victims of homicide,<sup>4</sup> women who are the victim of homicide are typically killed by someone they knew, especially an intimate partner relationship.<sup>5</sup> Intimate partner violence is now the leading cause of death of female homicide victims with 56 percent of female homicides being committed by an intimate partner. Research also points to an alarming likelihood that up to half of all South African women will be raped in their lifetime. The SA Medical Research Council estimates that only one in nine rapes is reported to authorities, creating a chilling realisation that we do not and cannot know the true extent of this violation. South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world and the highest number of new HIV infections worldwide and there are more HIV-positive people in South Africa than any other country in the world – nearly 6.5 million people in a population of around 54 million people. Both violence and HIV incidence are exacerbated by gender norms that equate manhood with dominance over women. Violence perpetrated by men is entrenched by a slow and ineffectual justice system, as well as patriarchal social norms. GBV costs the South African economy an estimated R28.4 – 42.4 billion per year.<sup>6</sup>

LGBTIQ+ communities remain marginalised and under threat, despite similarly progressive laws and policies – for example, South Africa is the only African country that legally recognises marriage equality - there is a steady rise in attacks against the LGBTIQ+ community, especially against lesbian women. These take the shape of “curative” or “corrective” rape; an illogical and false belief that such a violation will ‘turn’ someone into a heterosexual. Luleki Sizwe Womyn’s Project<sup>7</sup> reports that in South Africa 31 women have been murdered in the last ten years because of their sexuality. According to an article in the Daily Maverick,<sup>8</sup> in Cape Town alone, ten cases of ‘corrective’<sup>9</sup> rape are reported every week. Aside from a handful of statistics collected by civil society, comprehensive data on this phenomenon does not exist because data on rape is not disaggregated by motive of the attacker. According to the first-ever national study conducted into discrimination and hate

<sup>4</sup> It must be noted that the statistics on murder globally are largely gathered from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) however, they do not, along with South Africa, aggregate murder rates according to how many men were killed by intimate partners.

<sup>5</sup> 16 days of discontent: The overall picture, women 24, written by activists from the Shukumisa Campaign - which consists in 46 organizations and individuals across South Africa who work towards combating sexual violence. The Coalition is a mixture of community-based service organisations, research institutions and legal services. See Shukumisa Campaign 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Sonke Gender Justice Annual Report, 2014 - 2015. P. 10

<sup>7</sup> Luleki Sizwe Womyn’s Project is a Cape Town, South Africa based, non-profit organisation fighting against hate crimes, like corrective rape and sexual assault for more info go to <http://www.luleki-sizwe.com/>

<sup>8</sup> Mian, N. 2016. Ground Up: Hopes and fears about hate crime legislation, viewed 15 June 2016, <http://www.groundup.org.za/article/targeting-hate-crime/>.

<sup>9</sup> Although still known as “corrective rape” activists argue that the word ‘curative’ implies that there was something wrong to correct and alternatives are used such as ‘curative’.

crimes against South Africa’s LGBTIQ+ communities, 88% of those who experienced hate crimes did not report these incidents.<sup>10</sup>

The scenario drawn from these statistics is a society that is comfortable with violence against women and LGBTIQ+ persons. Society consents, implicitly and sometimes even explicitly, to the daily reality facing South Africa’s women and LGBTIQ+ persons. IJR recognises that it has a duty, working as it does in the justice and reconciliation sphere of influence, to address issues on gender-based violence. The GJR project is a realisation of that duty, working across South Africa directly with women and LGBTIQ+ persons in key communities to surface for and between individuals and communities the importance of gender justice. We create, implement and sustain interventions to address the impact of gender violence and also the root causes thereof. To do so, the GJR project grounds its work in a theoretical frame that is explicitly feminist and intersectional, with an understanding of how society –through structures of patriarchy and gender essentialism – results in harmful notions of and about women and LGBTIQ+ persons, expressed as a continuum of harm, from micro-aggressions and harassment to violent attacks. We explore further the theoretical underpinning informing our GJR work in the section that follows.

<sup>10</sup> The report was conducted as a research initiative of the Love Not Hate Campaign by a Pretoria-based organisation, Out LGBT Well-Being, see more on the report at <http://mg.co.za/article/2016-12-08-00-lesbian-activists-murder-puts-spotlight-on-hate-crime-new->



# THEORETICAL FRAMING

## INFORMING GJR INTERVENTIONS

Gender identity as defined by IJR is one's internal, personal sense of being a woman or man, boy or girl, androgynous or none of the above. Although many of us live in a society where people are classified along the lines of a gender binary of either male or female, it does not mean everyone in society conforms to such strict separation generally confused with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth. GJR works with the understanding that gender is intersectional<sup>11</sup> and that people experience their identity through intersections of race, class and gender (as well as a myriad other social identifications). Without addressing racial divides, structural and socio-economic inequality, gender justice cannot be achieved.

GJR works against notions of gender essentialism, a view that holds that men and women have inherent, unique and natural attributes based on inherently different natures. This is a seductive yet harmful understanding of gender identity and it has often been used to marginalise women in spaces that were not 'traditionally female', like places of work and government. Gender essentialism, it has been argued, results in pigeonholing women and LGBTIQ+ persons into accepted roles and professions, excuses the lack of advancement of women in certain fields and works to limit education and opportunities via implicit bias resulting in discrimination, sexism and misogyny. GJR, based on gender studies and feminist research, rejects the notion of gender essentialism, instead approaching gender-based work with the view that all people have characteristics and attributes that express themselves in different ways, and that there are no gender-based genes of those attributes.

With these factors informing society it is important, when conducting gender dialogues to create safe spaces. By creating spaces for women, men and LGBTIQ+ to acknowledge the pain of the other, to tell the truth and to pursue forgiveness and healing - the common goal of building more inclusive societies - gender reconciliation can be imagined and attained. However, while material and structural inequality remains, gender justice cannot be achieved. Therefore, definitions of reconciliation which address the material and structural changes align with the ideals of gender justice. In 2007, Nahla Valji authored a briefing paper looking at the gendered aspects of justice and reconciliation; she argued that justice, truth, reconciliation and guarantees of non-repetition for victims in the wake of conflict are just some of the core goals pursued by societies through the employment of transitional justice mechanisms. None of these goals, however, are attainable in a context of exclusion and inequality - as inequality, an injustice in itself, is a causal factor of conflict. "Violence thrives in societies entrenched in hierarchical structures and relations; and no inequality is more pervasive, both vertically and horizontally across the globe than gender inequality". Valji argues that gender justice can be defined as:

*"The protection and promotion of civil, political, economic and social rights on the basis of gender equality. It necessitates taking a gender perspective on the rights themselves, as well as the assessment of access and obstacles to the enjoyment of these rights for both women, men, girls and boys and adopting gender-sensitive strategies for protecting and promoting them,"*

Justice and reconciliation are, have been and will be experienced differently by women, men and all those who identify along the gender spectrum. To ignore the gendered experiences of justice and reconciliation is to further entrench harmful gender norms. This created a question around the nexus between gender justice and reconciliation. After many recent years of grappling with this question through discourse, academic research and occasional papers, the GJR project concludes that there exists no universal definition or meaning of reconciliation and argues that without gender justice, all attempts of reconciliation will be futile. This project seeks to use these definitions and position as a point of departure to assess the following questions: To what extent do South Africans feel they have achieved gender justice and reconciliation? What should this look like and entail in their particular sphere of influence? And what changes need to occur for this to happen?

<sup>11</sup> Critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term in 1989 in her paper "Politics," referring to the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class and gender and how they apply to a given individual. Intersectional feminism allows one to account for how in South Africa, gender justice is experienced differently across race and class.



From top left: participants attending workshop in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, Siyakha leader from Mitchells Plein, Western Cape, Siyakha leader from Elands Bay, Western Cape, women crocheting (top) and brainstorming (bottom) at Warrenton, Northern Cape inter-generational workshop.



# METHODOLOGY, PROCESS AND PARTICIPANTS

## A. THE METHODOLOGY INFORMING GJR DIALOGUES

The GJR project engaged in experiential learning as a tool to allow participants the opportunity to tell their stories on their own terms, unmediated and uncensored. However, GJR added a gendered lens to its methodology to allow participants to engage in issues of gender justice and reconciliation specifically. To do so, we used a participatory, exploratory approach towards conducting dialogues and discussions. The GJR project adopted an approach rooted in feminist principles that are democratic and inclusive. A gender sensitive participatory approach acknowledges the numerous obstacles to women and marginalized groups such as LGBTIQ+ communities' participation in dialogue processes and sets up mechanisms for lifting those obstacles. Particular attention is given to the differential experiences of women and men and LGBTIQ+ communities and, thus, their different opinions, concerns, needs, and priorities. This entails at times facilitating in-group dialogues with women only, or LGBTIQ+ only to create safe spaces for marginalized groups to tell their stories on their own terms, bringing groups together to listen to the other in a contained and carefully facilitated way. Participatory methodologies must be utilized to transfer tools to people to navigate gender identity and gender relations within their particular context.

For example, experiential learning as a tool to inspire dialogue was used and incorporated activities such as art, collage, free writing and poetry and a fish bowl exercise (which involves women and men sitting silently and listening to the opposite gender reflect on gender relations) and film. Furthermore a tool called "Binaries and Boxes or Not" developed by activist Delene Van Dyk was used to stimulate discussion on gender identity and sexuality. Creative dialogical tools create an environment that allows participants to explore topics in ways that are non-verbal, and therefore participants can have agency to choose how much they are comfortable sharing with others.

## B. GEOGRAPHIC LOCALITIES

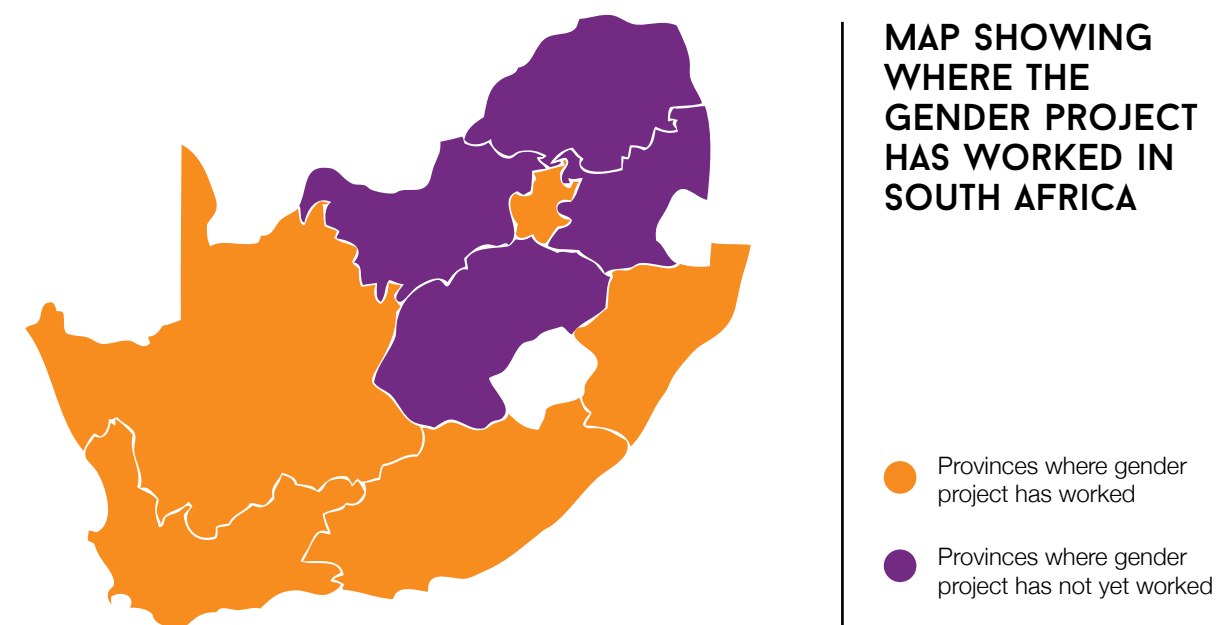
GJR, working within IJR's Building an Inclusive Society Programmen (BIS), targeted the communities identified by the programme at the start of its five-year journey in 2012 that focused on key geographies. Reasons for doing so include that contact had already been made, trust had started to be built, and cost-savings could be enhanced where dual approaches could be engaged during one excursion. BIS and thus GJR adopted an intervention strategy to increase collaboration and cross-cutting initiatives. This involved selecting targeted communities where all BIS projects would be implemented over the long-term, and with the involvement of the entire multi-disciplinary programme team. The strength of working in the targeted BIS communities lay in the fact that workshops were organized collaboratively with projects such as the Memory Arts and Culture (MAC) and Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project (AKYLDLP). Together we would host a workshop over a few days, combining our different approaches and methodologies but ultimately facilitating as a group with one workshop covering gender justice, youth leadership among other aspects. The value in working with a team of three to four facilitators cannot be emphasised enough. As facilitators we offer a myriad of skills and perspectives in the workshop space. For example, our workshops not only worked with issues of gender justice but incorporated dance and movement, youth leadership, social and emotional skills training, some skills development, work on identity, race and gender as well as reconciliation. Given that the topics we work with are often difficult and painful ones to explore having three to four facilitators enabled us to offer support to our participants, hold the space effectively and offer debrief support to each other. Working collaboratively enabled us to rigorously analyse our findings and outcomes.

Furthermore, geographic localities were chosen because it is premised on the BIS, and thus GJR departure point that deep, sustainable social change is possible through long-term work in specific communities. Communities chosen were those that remain profoundly affected by SA's historical conflict, divisions, identity groups and socio-economic inequality. In the Western Cape, IJR has been working with a group of community leaders who live in urban and rural areas of the province since 2009. These leaders live and work in communities deeply affected by the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, inequality and poverty. Leaders work at community level uplifting and empowering their stakeholders through informal community

based organizations (CBOs), community police forums, youth projects, door to door counselling, community trauma counselling, informal shelters and advice offices for abused and vulnerable women and children, food gardening and more. Through IJR's Community Healing Project, leaders have received reconciliation and community healing training over the last seven years to be empowered to take community-led reconciliation to their spaces of influence. Over the years the group have formed a network, and have recently formed their own community based organization called the Siyakha<sup>12</sup> Community Healing Forum. Working on issues of gender justice has been one of the areas in which they wish to work with and therefore the gender project has been supporting them.

BIS's other communities such as Warrenton in Northern Cape, Vryheid in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape were selected based on their particular legacy of apartheid which has left these peri-urban towns to suffer the socio-economic aftermath of poverty and inequality. In these communities IJR identified key people who are leaders and agents of change in their localities. These participants received training from IJR including accredited facilitation training and became mobilizers, support and co-facilitators enabling us to work deeply and ethically in these localities. GJR worked collaboratively with other BIS projects and regularly travelled to these three areas, creating and deepening community dialogues, meeting with partners, conducting workshops, screening films, mapping communities and organising events. Lastly, in an effort to increase networks and partnerships in other large cities in South Africa GJR partnered with the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), The Labour Research Service (LRS) and Gender at Work for a multi stakeholder dialogue in Johannesburg on gender justice in the workplace.

Another motivation to work in these specific communities over a sustained period of time was because IJR adopts a "mile deep, inch wide" methodology. IJR's approach to reconciliation work and the peculiarities of the South African NGO sector informs this methodological approach. BIS's strategy to work in targeted geographies for extended periods taps into the Institute's positionality of a formal, well-established organisation that also works at a community level – meaning that it has the influence of a large NGO and the levels of access of a smaller, less formal CBO "who often achieve greater impacts as they involve collective decision-making, encourage shared social spaces and driver community-led processes".<sup>13</sup> A long-term approach in targeted areas means that interventions can be adapted to community needs over time and implemented in culturally relevant ways.



<sup>12</sup> Siyakha means 'we are building'

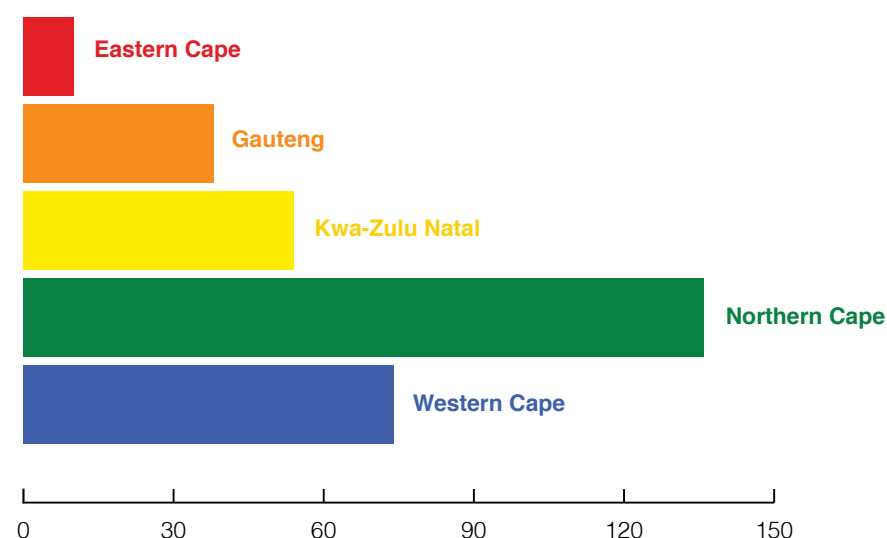
<sup>13</sup> Quoting Lehman, 2008. in *Pathways for connections: An Emerging Model for Long-Term Reconciliation in Post-Conflict South Africa*, published by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2016



## C. PARTICIPANTS

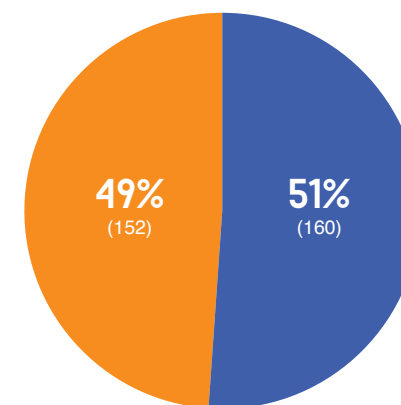
GJR has held dialogues with approximately 312 people since May 2015 until December 2016 in five provinces in South Africa, namely the Western Cape (74), Eastern Cape (10), Northern Cape (136), Kwa-Zulu Natal (54) and Gauteng (38). The project sought to uncover perspectives from a wide range of communities and interest groups in South Africa hence the work across five provinces, yet piloting our methodology required deep and sustained work in a few geographies to test change over time and establish trust. This was our motivation for working more deeply in the Northern and Western Cape. In the Western Cape seven dialogues were conducted with the Siyakha community healing forum, the Lavender Hill LGBTIQ+ safe space, De Doorn's (a small town in the rural part of the province) women's group and a group of student bodies at Stellenbosch University. In Warrenton Northern Cape six dialogues were conducted with youth between the ages of 18-35 years (3 in total), two with an intergenerational women's group and one multi- stakeholder dialogue with the Kimberly LGBTIQ+ communities. Kwa-Zulu Natal saw three dialogues take place, and Gauteng and Eastern Cape one each.

### PARTICIPANTS SPLIT BY PROVINCE



Most of the gender dialogues were inclusive of all genders and were attended by women, men and transgender persons. Interestingly despite attendance registers requesting peoples 'gender' and not being specific to which ones, all the trans individuals who attended identified as either male or female on our forms never as trans and never leaving it blank.<sup>14</sup> Three of our dialogues were women only spaces - set up to create a safe space for marginalized groups within the communities in which we were working. Furthermore, our LGBTIQ+ dialogue in Kimberly although open to all was predominantly attended by those identifying as LGBTIQ+, we also held a dialogue with a LGBTIQ+ safe space group from Lavender Hill - attended predominantly by LGBTIQ+ persons but also cis gendered heteronormative persons. Our participation of women and men are almost equally split 50/50.

<sup>14</sup> This trend speaks to a general trend in official forms whereby people are asked their gender but list only male and female as options confusing sex with gender. While our forms were open almost everyone chose to list their sex.



### PARTICIPANTS SPLIT BY SEX

Male  
Female

## D. THE 3-STEP PROCESS FRAMING GENDER DIALOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

GJR approaches gender dialogues using a 3-step process that takes participants through a journey that facilitates their reflection on issues of gender, sexuality, orientation, gender justice, their personal narrative in a gender context and reimagining new ways to frame gender for themselves and in how they relate to others.

### Understanding gender and sexuality

The first part to understanding gender and sexuality is to start a gender process of inclusivity. This involved challenging notions and meanings of gender and sexual orientation. Traditionally, the former means 'men and women' and the latter, usually, heterosexual. Prefacing the subsequent dialogue with this conveys that the intervention includes the whole gender and sexuality spectrum. It also immediately encourages people into a new mind-set, where things usually not spoken of are directly confronted. This has a powerful capacity to validate for marginalised peoples that their voices are heard, the views matter and that *they* matter. Through various means, this session provided participants with the tools to understand gender and power relations, their own gendered identity and those of others.

This step begins with the screening of IJR's Season five of African Identities, showcasing the life stories of some people that form part of the LGBTIQ+ community in Kimberly Northern Cape. Following the screening participants engage in dialogue on the themes that the film brought up and their ideas and beliefs around sexual orientation and gender. Following this the second activity, namely *Human Sexuality – Binaries & Boxes... (or Not!)* is facilitated with participants. This was developed by Delene van Dyk in conjunction with OUT LGBT Wellbeing.

The aim of *Human Sexuality – Binaries & Boxes... or Not!* are:

- To ensure that participants know the difference between sex, gender, sexual orientation and sexual behaviour.
- To empower participants with the terminology and knowledge on gender identity and sexual orientation.
- To encourage participants to challenge widespread belief systems that men and women should act in certain ways, and to raise awareness for marginalized groups and gender discrimination.

### My gender story

The goal of this step is to create spaces where participants can tell their life stories on their own terms and to be and feel encouraged to see the gendered aspect of their lives. This part of the gender dialogue intentionally pushes back against typical Western, liberal feminism which often has an approach that ignores individual



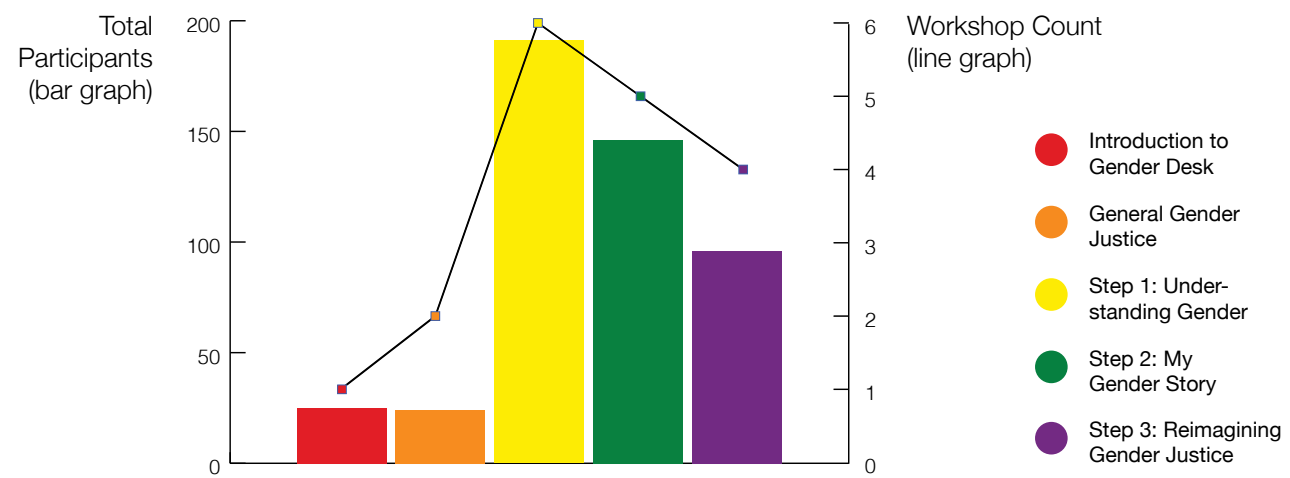
identities, especially race, class and indigenous values that inform people’s lives. My Gender Story teaches that the material consequences of gender are experienced differently by people according to our varied identities – race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief and expression. This creates a space for participants to articulate their personal narrative of their own terms and in unmediated ways for better sense-making and reimagining of their gender. The tools used in this step are poetry, free writing, performance, art and the ‘River of Life ‘, which is a process whereby participants draw their life story in the form of a river, showcasing various key moments along the way and are then invited to share with others in small groups.

Reimagining gender justice part 1.

This step is two-fold. Firstly, it speaks to an acknowledgement that gender justice cannot be achieved if access to justice is not available to all in society and where, structurally and materially, people remain oppressed. In this process participants are invited to explore what avenues people have to report crime, rape, gender-based violence, locating safe spaces and sharing that information, medical care and support networks for women, men and LGBTQI+ communities. The framing is to answer the challenge of what support communities need in order to achieve a gender just community. The second aspect asks participants to reflect on how they define gender justice and how it manifests, or not, in their localities. Overall, this theme also explores consent, it’s meaning and related issues, and how consent is defined in their contexts. Tools used are community mapping exercises followed by conversations on consent.

Re-imagining gender justice part 2.

In this step, the dialogue explores creative ways in which participants can reimagine how gender justice and reconciliation would manifest in their particular contexts with the purpose of sparking possibilities for personal growth. Tool used include a methodology called Open Space technology whereby participants generate their own topics of discussion and come up with their own solutions to a central challenge. This methodology immediately enables all present to be active agents of change. Furthermore, activities are incorporated to encourage people to re-imagine the maps, seeing the assets and forging new pathways for their community to change. This step is about activating personal and community change, seeing a way forward but sharing tools that allow people to decide that change in their own way and on their own terms.



This graph gives a visual representation of how many people participated in which step of the process and how many dialogues took place with each step.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The graph indicates that only a few workshops were facilitated around the topic titled ‘general gender justice’ and ‘introduction to gender desk’, the reason being that GJR had not yet developed the steps in full and where still exploring the topic.



Participants attending a womens workshop in Warrenton, Northern Cape engage in creative dialogue activities.



# THREE-STEP PROCESS IN GJR DIALOGICAL INTERVENTIONS: RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

## STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The African Identities<sup>16</sup> Films on LGBTIQ+ community in the Northern Cape enabled a deep and transformative dialogue process across different groups and ages on gender justice. This session was facilitated with young adults in Vryheid Kwa-Zulu Natal, young adults in Warrenton Northern Cape, high school students in Grahamstown Eastern Cape, LGBTIQ+ community in Northern Cape and Western Cape and community leaders from across the Western Cape (mostly over the age of 35 years). Season five of African identities showcases the life stories and gender experiences of the LGBTIQ+ community in Northern Cape. Each film showcases a different aspect of gender and sexual orientation. For example, Peter is a homosexual man who was completely abandoned by his family because of his sexuality, Grayton is transgender and discusses his struggle with depression as he lacks access to medical treatment he needs to fully transition, something he wants.<sup>17</sup> Immediately, through the films some of the most marginalized groups are centred in the conversation on gender. Furthermore, these are South African stories - they are relatable and accessible. Lastly, one cannot escape the empathy you feel hearing their stories, hearing how they have suffered and continue to suffer because of who they are. The films humanize individuals in our society who are often dehumanised and demonized.

### i. Communities reached

**Total people reached: 191**

**Total communities/groups: 6**

- Warrenton, Northern Cape (young adults; men and women)
- Northern Cape, LGBTIQ++ community (young adults men and women & transpersons)
- Grahamstown, Eastern Cape ( 13 high school learners)
- Western Cape, Siyakha Community Leaders (urban and rural men and women)
- Western Cape, Lavender Hill, LGBTIQ+ community members (young adults)
- Vryheid KZN (young adults; men and women)

### ii. Main outcomes

The “Binaries and Boxes or Not” exercise in conjunction with the films gave participants the tools to transform exclusive narratives into inclusive ones, thereby challenging discrimination. Through these types of dialogues, the LGBTIQ+ community is immediately included in a broader discussion on gender justice and gender identity. The “Binaries and Boxes or Not” tool was an avenue to not only talk about LGBTIQ+ issues, but also issues affecting heterosexual and cisgendered individuals. The tool brought to the surface gender conditioning that everyone experiences growing up and challenged individuals to look outside of the box as well as educated people on the basics around sex and gender.

When planning for the way forward, participants in Vryheid brainstormed some of the things they wish they could do for the LGBTIQ+ community, some of these plans included: forming LGBTIQ+ open group meetings, programmes to raise awareness among adults and youth in issues affecting LGBTIQ+ people, pressure on government to have more gender inclusive spaces such as toilets and public swimming pools that do not only have male and female bathrooms, access to medication for transgender people in the process of transitioning, gay pride days at schools, and television and radio shows to raise awareness. Following the workshop, participants reflected on their experiences. One person commented that:

<sup>16</sup> African Identities are a series of documentary films produced by IJR's Memory Arts and Culture Project annually.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that not all trans persons want medical intervention to “fully” transition.

“To be honest I was shocked when I watched the films. I really never liked gay people and I don't say I like them. When I watched the films it touched my heart, I felt sad seeing how people judge gay men. From now on I will respect gay and lesbian people and not judge them.”

- Vryheid group, 2015

After a dialogue in Warrenton one man commented,

“Yesterday I learnt about assumptions, and about gender equality. Most guys jump to conclusions about women and it's not right. We have to go back.”

- Warrenton group, 2016

While another stated that:

“I have never really heard their stories and the pain that they go through, the suffering that the community puts them through. After watching the videos I have learned to be more aware, more compassionate and more accepting of them although when seeing them intimate it is still unbearable to watch but with time it can be something that can accept and see as the norm.”

- Vryheid group, 2015

Similarly, the responses regarding the impact of the “Binaries and Boxes, or Not” exercise was equally as positive, with respondents commenting on how it helped them to clarify the differences between sex, gender, sexual orientation and sexual play. Many wrote that initially they thought it was the same thing. The Siyakha community leaders, for example, discussed how as leaders they need to be informed with this knowledge so that they can speak openly about sex and gender identity so that these things are no longer taboo. They discussed they need to challenge themselves, their beliefs and face the facts about issues of sex and gender. Some community leaders have used Binaries and Boxes in their own contexts, as the tool is easily transferable and easy to use.

In conclusion, participants were asked what they would do differently as an agent of change after learning about LGBTIQ+. Everyone who responded committed to sharing the knowledge, challenge discrimination and use their voice to someone bring about change. One powerful comment adequately summarized many of the others:

“After I learn about LGBTI I am going to the youth of my community to teach them what I have learned at the workshop about LGBTI because there are so many gay and lesbian people in my community and people hate them and they call them with so many naughty and disgusting names and they make them feel so uncomfortable and I want to teach them that gay people are important, there is no need to discriminate against them - we need to support them and respect - it's their choice.”

- Vryheid group, 2015

These sessions brought forth many questions for people around sexual orientation and identity, and also for many it surfaced their own prejudice and with some, even hatred for homosexuality. Overall, it significantly deepened individual understandings (based on workshop reports) on the differences between sex, gender and sexual orientation and how gender is performed and shaped by society. Participants were left with an improved understanding of themselves and society around them. It challenged long-held assumptions and prejudices, often learnt tacitly and unconsciously, around sex and gender, disrupting and deconstructing negative stereotypes and associated connotations. In addition, and most rewarding, participants reported that this tool can and has been used in other workshops outside of IJR/GJR interventions, sparking community-led

dialogues and constructing self-led and owned meaning around gender, understanding gender and sexuality, and what that means for peacebuilding, equality, representation and reconciliation.

Lastly, conducting this session with LGBTIQ+ participants highlighted the need for marginalized identity groups to hear that different identities and sexual orientations are recognized and protected by our Constitution, it was affirming and allowed spaces for dialogue on what it means to identify as different to heterosexual and cisgender. The participants urged for these tools to be shared far and wide to help end discrimination so that LGBTIQ+ can be seen for their skills and assets and not as a gay man or lesbian women. It was suggested though that when screening the films to audiences who identify as LGBTIQ+ that adequate support and debriefing takes place as these films can be triggering and remind participants of trauma they have and continue to have as a result of their gender and sexual orientation.

iii. The main themes that emerged from step 1 were:

- Issues around gender stereotypes and harmful gender conditioning
- Prejudice and assumptions towards the LGBTIQ+ communities and marginalized groups
- Harmful messaging around masculinity and what it means to be a man
- Masculinity: men perceiving LGBTI identities as a threat to masculinity



Participants attending a dialogue in Warrenton, Northern Cape.

STEP 2: MY GENDER STORY

In step two of the gender dialogue process participants were invited to reflect on their life stories, their gender stories in particular and either share with the opposite gender or in same gender groups. This step was explored piloting a variety of storytelling activities - most invoking creative story telling methodologies. This step was facilitated with a variety of groups such as the Siyakha community healing forum in the Western Cape, women only spaces in the Northern Cape, and mixed gender out of school youth groups in Vryheid and Warrenton. Unlike step 1 which used the same activities, step 2's outcomes reflect the piloting of different activities and methodologies that we tried and tested, this section reflects on the lessons learnt from the various story telling techniques employed.

i. Communities Reached

Total people reached: 146  
Total communities/groups: 5

- Vryheid Kwa-Zulu Natal (youth 18- 35 years)
- Warrenton Asset Based Development Workshop (youth 18-35 years)
- Warrenton Northern Cape (youth 18 - 35 years)
- Warrenton Northern Cape: women's retreat
- Siyakha Community Healing Forum: community leaders women and men from urban and rural Western Cape

ii. Main Outcomes

In Vryheid, Kwa- Zulu Natal, out-of-school youth consisting of both women and men engaged in a mask-making activity exploring how we are perceived on the outside versus how we are on the inside. Using creative materials participants explored how their identity is made of various masks and performances we play which sometimes are different to how we view ourselves. One man demonstrated how on the outside he is viewed by the world as a gangster because of perceptions and stereotyping casting him as so, whereas on the other side of his mask he depicted a man who has dreams of owning his own business, being successful and living a life very different to how he feels he is perceived. The mask activity opened up dialogue among participants on the different aspects of our identities and how what we perform to the world may be based on expectation and conditioning, versus what we who we are on the inside. It opened up discussion on gender roles and the various elements of identity. One major point of conversation was how young women are not allowed to come home late and have strict rules governing their lives. Yet, young men enjoy more independence and less surveillance from family. On the one hand this is to ensure the safety of women but female participants complained that it was because they were not trusted to have the same independence as their male counterparts and felt stifled by the different expectations they experienced in relation to men.

In Warrenton Northern Cape, women and men engaged in a variety of storytelling activities such as body mapping<sup>18</sup> as well as gender self - portraits where participants engaged in story telling activity utilizing poetry and writing. The Fish Bowl activity resulted in interesting outcomes. Men and women were asked to split into two groups. Women were invited to sit in a circle while men sat in circle around the women and were asked to listen in silence. Everyone in the group was cis-gendered besides one man who was trans and wanted to identify as male and join the men's group. Women were asked to dialogue on how men in the community see them and share stories. Men could only listen, not respond. Following this, the women had to sit on the outside circle while the men sat in the middle and did the same. The objective of the dialogue was to create a safe space for women and men to discuss the assumptions they have about the other genders. The activity was an extremely emotional experience and very triggering for many of the participants. For women, it was a rare time for men to hear the pain and abuse they feel at the hands of men in their families and communities.

<sup>18</sup> This activity involves outlining your body on a large sheet of paper and filling the inside of your silhouette with images, collage and drawing to tell your life story and depict who you are. Following this you are invited to share elements of your body map with the group who watch and listen in silent witness.



For some men, it was the first time they were placed in a position to listen without interruption. One women summed it up saying the abuse for women was tangible:

“*We are emotional because we have witnessed it. It is part of our reality,*”

- Female participant, Asset Based Development Workshop,  
Warrenton Northern Cape, May 2015

It emerged that women feel like they do not have much decision making power in the community, are not heard and respected by men, and are made to feel alienated. For some women, it was too painful to even speak. For the men, it was extremely challenging to sit in silence and witness the women speaking about how men make them feel. The men revealed deep mistrust and even anger towards women, commenting on how they “always change their minds, want money and are lazy.” The dialogue unearthed deep gender fault lines and anger.

For some women, the dialogue created a safe space to speak and acknowledge their strengths and assets. For some men, the shifts were great and for others it was the first step, but the conversation was started on how to challenge assumptions about women and define new ways of being a man in the community.

One of the key lessons in storytelling and gender work has been that story telling can be a triggering and emotionally draining and complex experience for participants. On the one hand story telling can be a healing experience; Participants from the Siyakha Community Healing Forum reflected how the process of telling one’s story through writing and the River of Life allows one to let go of the past and heal memories, however for many story-telling can re-traumatize and trigger memories. It is essential that support and debriefing is in place.

In an inter-generational women’s workshop hosted in collaboration with the Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Project and Memory Arts and Culture Project facilitation tools were drawn on to invite participants to share their stories but only going as far as they were comfortable. The workshop engaged free writing activities, poetry, painting, movement and collage. In her occasional paper,<sup>19</sup> Lindsey Doyle, research fellow visiting IJR, wrote about the experience of co-facilitating this workshop. Below are some of her reflections and lessons learnt, which can applied to gender and storytelling across different contexts.

- **Trauma should not be engaged unless people want to:** “Rather than working with people’s trauma directly and explicitly as the objective of a dialogue, utilizing artistic approaches allowed the women to bring to the process what they wanted to, whether that was the expression of traumatic events or a desire to have a break from the stressors of their daily lives. Given the well-documented risks of re-traumatisation through storytelling and truth telling, the facilitators never asked the participants about challenges or traumas in their own lives, and yet, many of the women spoke of these topics on their own volition.” A variety of artistic and creative approaches to storytelling “allowed people to make their own choices about how they wanted to engage, which is an inherently empowering experience.”
- **Combining movement and mindful meditation between story telling activities was very therapeutic:** “Many of the women spoke about “having a lot on their shoulders,” “having to be strong all the time,” “cooking, cleaning, and doing things for the kids,” and always having to look out for other people rather than for themselves. Activities that engaged people’s bodies contributed to a release of stress through humour and physical exercise.”
- **Artistic expression offers ways of expression beyond the verbal,** which in a linguistically diverse space creates an inclusive environment.
- **“The challenges presented by using artistic mediums caused some people with little previous artistic experience to realize that they were talented in ways they had never imagined.** When reflecting on painting, one woman said, “It was hard [to paint] at first, not being familiar with painting,

19 Doyle, Lindsey. “Creativity in Conflict: Performing Arts for Sustained Dialogue, Justice, and Reconciliation”, Occasional Paper. Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2017, p. 25-28.

but then I thought about what kinds of safe spaces we need. I channelled the need for the home to be a safe place”... After the creative writing and painting exercises, some of the women explained, “I can do it, I can say it!” Another expressed that she had no idea that she could write, but that she discovered she was capable. When others were speaking about the experience of free writing, it also became clear that a low level of literacy was not a stumbling block, contrary to initial expectations; women who had a primary level of education were able to write, and in fact, being challenged to do so was a self-esteem-building experience because they realized their own capabilities. This finding is especially important to consider in a context in which many other influences in their lives may degrade their view of self.”

- **“Art that allows for positive symbolic representation of self can motivate and empower.** Seeing oneself in artistic products and having it recognized is an important experience.”
- **“There is a connection between an increase in self-care, development of self-esteem, and action at the community level.** This experience supported the idea that in order for an individual to be an effective change-maker, they first need to comfortable with themselves. Building on this, one possible theory of change for working with trauma-affected communities and groups is that through processes of self-care and self-awareness, individuals communicate more calmly with the people in their lives, are able to relinquish the need to control every aspect of their environment, and therefore are better equipped to make incremental changes in their own communities without “burning out.”

Some of the women reflected: ““The exercises reminded me of what is happening in my life. I must take everything, accept what I cannot change, and move on,” “We need quiet time,” “I learned that exercise is important to me...I am a new person,” “This was ‘me’ time!” “I wish this [retreat] was for a whole week!” Reflective, artistic activities improved their stamina and will to continue to move forward, despite challenges along the way. Some even spoke about how they could use journaling for goal-setting to “go back in two years to see if I did what I said [I would do].”

By the end of the retreat, the women expressed a collectivisation of their challenges saying things along the lines of: “We all have the challenges,” “We carry a lot of things but we’re not supposed to show it on our faces...[I realized that] we are all the same and have problems and challenges,” “Often we don’t speak out about our problems and challenges and keep quiet because we think that other people are better off than we are, but I realized that we are all facing the same thing.””<sup>20</sup>

### iii. The main themes that emerged from the step 2 were:

- **Violent Masculinities:** men being conditioned to believe that manhood means being dominant and aggressive and men finding it difficult to be different types of men.
- **Domestic violence:** women experiencing violence at the hands of intimate partners and/or growing up witnessing their mothers experiencing violence.
- **Gender conditioning:** struggles to be the type of women/man/neither in a family or community that expects women and men to be a certain way.
- **Cultural traditions:** appreciation and recognition for cultural traditions that celebrate their gender identity.
- **Spirituality:** connection to religion and faith as being integral to gender identity.
- **Employment:** lack of employment opportunities resulting in issues around dependence and insecurity.

20 Ibid. Doyle, 2017.

STEP 3: RE-IMAGINING GENDER JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

After exploring personal gender stories, in the previous step, Step 3 moves into dialogue around gender justice and how it manifests in the private and public sphere. Re-imagining gender justice sought to create spaces where people could define for themselves what justice means, both in terms of having agency over your physical body and physical space. Dialogues were centred on the questions: where do people seek justice in their homes and communities? What mechanisms of justice both formal (police, social services, courts) and informal (community leaders, informal support groups) operate in their communities? The goal of the dialogues for people to map out how justice should exist in their spaces, what works, what doesn't work, what is needed from outside the communities and what can be strengthened from within. This step focuses on two parts, firstly exploring how gender justice exists for individuals and communities and secondly exploring how people re-imagine gender justice and reconciliation to be going forward.

i. Communities reached

Total people reached: 96  
Total communities: 4

- Vryheid Kwa - Zulu Natal (women and men 18- 35 years)
- Warrenton Northern Cape (2x women intergenerational dialogues)
- Siyakha community healing forum, Western Cape (women and men)
- Gauteng Province, Gender Justice in the workplace multi-stakeholder dialogue (women and men)

ii. Main Outcomes  
Part 1: Gender Justice

Good sex vs. harmful sex, conversations on consent:

In Vryheid and Warrenton, IJR created a platforms in which the prejudices around sexual practices and gender roles were shared through a dialogue on consent, good verses harmful sex.<sup>21</sup> Vryheid was attended by women and men, while in Warrenton only women attended but from all generations. In Vryheid, platforms allowed for personal experiences of gender relations and sexual practices to be shared in order to build a consciousness around the gender system in their community and to acknowledge the narrative of those oppressed by the current patriarchal gender systems. Issues that were raised within the dialogue centred on the different notions of consent between women and men. It seemed to be that everyone in the room agreed that consent is not given for sex when a woman or man says no, however some men indicated that women can say no with their mouths but yes with their bodies, causing debate on blurred lines that some people think exist when consent has not in fact been granted. Many themes emerged on the intersection of culture, tradition and religion and marriage. Participants stated that within a marriage it is harder to turn down sex to your husband. One of the participants stated that:

“When you get married, you must not say no to your husband. You must never deny your husband.”

When a wife says no to her husband, there was a sense of shame linked to that act. For two men in the group, asking permission from your wife was unheard of. However, dialogue on cultural rules where elders need to be consulted when there is no consent within a marriage emerged within a dialogue bringing to light forms of gender justice imbedded in tradition and culture.

Conversations in both communities also explored issues of rape, in particular child rape. In Vryheid, one of the participants spoke about how shared concern on the issue of rape occurring in intimate spaces. One of

21 Sessions on consent were facilitated by Mbali Matandela, intern at IJR. This sections cites her reports and reflections.

the women shared how “I know a girl who was twelve, who has sex with her father from the age of twelve and she got used to it. She was used to it by the age of the sixteen and it wasn't going to stop, but it wasn't her choice. She was already pregnant from her father when he eventually got arrested”. It is stories like these highlight the challenges that victims of sexual violence have in accessing the gender justice systems, especially when there is a minor involved or the perpetrator is a close relative. In Warrenton, Northern Cape, the older generation, in particular, shared painful stories about their teenage years when their mothers forced them to have back street abortions, damaging their bodies permanently. Reproductive rights seemed to still be a contentious issue among the women who state that some mothers force their teenage daughters to be on the “injection” which is a common form of birth control administered by injection in the public health sector. As such, consent seems to mean different things in different contexts and depends largely on the power relations between women and men. Besides those that IJR initiated, dialogues in the community about consent and reproductive rights were infrequent, remaining solely in the private sphere.

Mapping gender justice

Collective research into community assets and needs empowers participants to not only understand their community better, but also to be agents of change. Through research they become the “experts” on gender in their community. The mapping activity enabled participants to see where they feel safe and unsafe, places of learning and development, and places of opportunity so that they can see where the divides are, what they need in order to overcome them and how they can make a change.

In Vryheid, participants mapped out three areas, namely Mondlo, Lakeside and the central town. Vryheid Mondlo is a historically black township and experiences high levels of poverty. In Warrenton participants' received maps of Ikhutseng, the historically black township and Warrenvale, the coloured area. Siyakha leaders each come from different communities in both urban and rural parts of the Western Cape, each person had their own map representing their community. Participants had to mark where different groups lived (i.e. Leaders, poor people, wealthy people, different racial groups, foreigners, sex workers). Following this, participants had to note on the maps key institutions, government departments or any sites of significance. After this, participants had to mark dangerous places for women and men, places people can go help for women and men, spaces for expression for women and men, spaces for action or change for women and men, spaces for belonging for women and men, places of work and places where people socialize. Finally, participants reported back to the main group and had a discussion on the gender-based differences in safety in the community.

- **Violent spaces:** The mapping exercise indicated that communities are perceived as dangerous places for both men and women, but predominantly women, with specific areas being hot spots for crime like rape and murder.<sup>22</sup> In Warrenton, one woman stated, “I can't walk alone at night because of rape, murder, and robbery.” Siyakha leaders from urban areas in the Western Cape commented how it was difficult to mark where there were safe and unsafe spaces in their communities, as the overwhelmingly high rates of gang violence made the communities seem like a war zone.
- **Intersections of race and gender oppression:** In Vryheid, the marking of people according to race and class and in proximity to the town centre was a clear indication that the lived reality resembles that of apartheid spatial planning. It seems that, like many other South African towns, the town centre and surrounds was predominantly still occupied by white people with black and poor residents living far from the town centre on the margins of Mondlo. However, it also showed how foreign nationals and sex workers are also living on the margins of the town and township. In Warrenton, women described how they are not only victims of violence at the hands of men in their community, but also victims of racial violence by white people in the town. One woman explained how in one hotel bar in the town, black and coloured people are not allowed to be guests.
- **Gendered nature of crime and violence:** In Vryheid men in the group identified a place near the police station where women are raped at a place by the police station, one participant commented that “women

22 It should be stated that these views reflect the perceptions people have of crime not crime statistics. Perceptions and the ways in which people dialogue on these issues is further influenced by gender norms. For example, men experience high rates of violence and crime yet there are social taboos around men talking about it. However, women are more acceptably framed as victims within society and so to discuss it in open forums is easier.



are raped there because there are lots of trees” describing how the trees create hiding places for criminals and violence to take place far from sight. It seemed as if everyone knows this is a place where women are raped, it appears to be a tacitly open communal acceptance that this is what goes on there. Furthermore it appeared to be women’s’ responsibility to know to avoid these places because “it’s where women get raped”, carrying within it a further message that if you do get raped there it is somehow your own fault (blaming the victim) as opposed to the communities and states responsibility to make sure this space was safe for women. People also commented that women run the risk of getting rape and killed in taverns. Areas around the bottle stores were also marked as unsafe for women. Everyone was in agreement that women cannot walk alone at night. Participants commented that if men are attacked they are killed but if women are attacked they are raped.

- **Spaces where people can get help:** In Vryheid, people identified a list of places where people can go to get help if experiencing crime or violence such as the local Wellness Centre, clinics, police station and even the South African Social Services Centre (SASSA). However, one disturbing remark from the dialogue was how if a woman goes to the police to report gender-based violence in her home, the police will tell her to solve her problem at home and if she goes to church they will pray for her. There was agreement that there were few places to which women could go to get help for domestic violence. However, they did indicate that the police will assist if a woman is raped and take the crime seriously. Furthermore, if men report gender-based violence, such as being beaten by their wives or partners, the police will laugh at them.

In Warrenton, one IJR ambassador stated how while doing the mapping activity she realized the “shortages of places of safety in Warrenvale.” She is now starting to form a group that creates safe spaces in Warrenvale. “We knock door to door to ask about issues of safety. About a week ago, we knocked on a door where the wife was hitting the man. When we started having a conversation, the husband started talking and he said there is absolutely no violence.” If the man went to the police station to report the abuse from his wife, “They would laugh at him and tell him to man up.” Another women commented how “the problem with the police, is that they like to act like social workers and they will tell you to go back to your family and talk to them instead of opening a case.” Neither is the department of social development being supportive of issues either. The IJR ambassador mentioned, “The problem with the Department of Social Development is that they are slow and ineffective.” To try and fill the gap, this ambassador walks door-to-door collecting information on abusive households and encourages the social worker to act. Although dangerous, she feels as though she has to make sure the Department of Social Development respond in some way.

- **Spaces of action and change:** Another important outcome was the gendered nature of expression, action and change in Mondlo. It was clear through the mapping that men socialize by taverns and bottle stores and are able to make changes through community leaders and the mayor. However, women see sites of expression and change at Churches and crèches.

#### The main themes that emerged from the step 3 part 1 were:

- Influence of cultural practice, religion and human rights on interpretations of consent
- Agency and power over reproductive health and rights
- Child abuse/child rape
- Lack of support from social service
- Lack of safe space
- Gendered nature of violence
- Intersectional experiences of oppression along race, class and gender lines
- Shame around women abusing men

## Part 2: Re-imagining gender justice

### Rewriting the maps:

Participants who engaged in the mapping activity reflected how mapping proved to be a useful tool as it enabled them to understand their communities better, share knowledge with each other on where it is safe and where it is not and pinpoint the exact gaps and needs within the communities. One Siyakha leader commented that “the mapping was good because now I can pinpoint exactly where we can create a safe space.” It was important not to stop at the mapping, but rather, to examine what comes next and to use the maps constructively to build more gender-just communities. In Vryheid, participants were encouraged to examine their needs as a community, what they can do and what they need others to do to fulfil those needs. In groups, participants brainstormed specific things they can do to make a change and what they need to do so. Some examples included hosting community meetings to organize a community policing forum, as well as mobilizing to try get taverns to close rather than being open for 24 hours a day. In Warrenton, women committed to try to reimagine the communities by saying:

*“I can offer a space for children and women. I want to look for children with learning disabilities who are often ostracised in the community. We can teach them skills and crafts with their hands. There is a space that used to be a crèche in Warrenvale, the woman has passed on. I have spoken to the social worker about using that space.”*

-Warrenton

*“We want to do interventions in schools to motivate learners and to also go door to door in the community. We also want to address maladministration in the public sector and we want to contact the public protector office. We want them to come back and take charge because those people are there because of the community. Some children in the community have been left by their parents because of alcoholism, so we want to make sure that these children get food and have access to a social worker. We also make the old age home more effective and we want to start a crèche. If we speak in one voice, we will get a lot done. We want the church to support our endeavours. We also do not have recreational activities and we need to make our library more effective. We need to put pressure on our municipality and we are going to find the relevant people to lead us to change. It's personal because I'm involved in social interventions.”*

- Warrenton

*“In Warrenton, I see there are a lot of youth doing drugs. I want to start a dance group for rehabilitation centre in Warrenvale and Ikutseng.”*

### Creating an open space dialogue:

Case study Gauteng Gender justice in the workplace dialogue

*“We wouldn't be here if things were okay – there is a continued need to challenge the system which renders gender in the workplace as unjust.”*

- participant at gender justice in the workplace dialogue

In the spirit of reimagining gender justice and in the pursuit of creating inclusive and democratic spaces, GJR in collaboration with IJR's Inclusive Economies Project<sup>23</sup> teamed up for a dialogue. In celebration of women's month,<sup>24</sup> the IJR, the Commission for Gender Equality, Gender at Work and the Labour Research Service came together to create a platform for women and men across race, class and sexual orientation, working in different sectors could share experiences, knowledge and insights on gender justice within the workplace. Participants were invited to join a diverse room of women and men from the industrial, medical, academic, public, financial, education and private sectors who are committed to and interested in answering the overarching question: *How can we create gender just organisations and workplaces?*<sup>25</sup>

The methodology used was the 'open space' methodology. Facilitated by Michel Friedman, it encouraged active participation and invited everyone present to bring to the conversation whatever issues they are most concerned about – at both personal and structural levels. The methodology immediately breaks from the usual conference style or panel discussion, thereby disrupting our preconceived ideas around experts and participants. Open Space suggests that everyone who attends a dialogue is an expert and so everyone should have collective ownership of the solutions. At the start, participants have to generate topics for the breakaway sessions, topics had to be pitched as a question and those attending that breakaway would be invited to answer the question.

The participants were then given the floor to create their own agenda by writing down and presenting their own pressing questions on topics related to gender justice in and affecting interaction in the workplace. Break-away sessions followed as participants drifted into any space they felt inclined to; this happened twice (more can be facilitated given various limitations such as time). Finally, a plenary was held in which people were invited to share negative and positive experiences engaged within the spaces provided.

#### Examples of topics raised:

- How can we create workplaces free of gendered discrimination?
- Can we define gender justice homogeneously across workplaces?
- How can we recognise male counterparts for paternity leave?
- How do we ensure there are policies which accommodate those living with HIV/AIDS at the workplace – especially in regard to discrimination against the LGBTI community?
- How do we move beyond neoliberal/capitalist ideas of gender inclusion in creating holistically just spaces within the workplace?
- Why are top positions in organisations lonely places for women?
- How can we challenge the values traditionally ascribed to 'masculine traits' of good leadership? Which traits are seen as strengths and which are seen as weaknesses?
- How do we prioritise 'feminised traits' such as emotional intelligence or relationships in the workplace? Do we need the full buy-in from the social majority (hegemonic heteronormative conforming) for a gender-just organisation to exist? If so, how do we get the buy-in – especially from men?
- How do we increase conscientiousness of the feminist agenda among management/leadership who are predominantly men without being reprimanded for insolence?
- Is the current quota system helping to improve the gender balance at work? How do we build and organisation/community where gender and cultural/traditional issues are spoken about freely?
- How do we build solidarity between women across class lines to advance their interests in the labour market?

By the time plenary started, people had concrete answers for what needs to change in order for gender justice in the workplace to be attained. There was a sense that everyone present contributed. Some of the answers that emerged during plenary were that:

- Gender justice is not only for women. Men must be invited into the space and engage as equals stakeholders in the space. It is not the duty of women to teach men about gender justice. Once

<sup>23</sup> IJR's Inclusive Economies Projects falls within the Policy and Analysis programme in the Institute

<sup>24</sup> Women's Month takes place during August in South Africa in honour of the 9th of August marking women's day.

<sup>25</sup> These reflections come from IJR's intern Mandipa Ndlovu's written report on the event

invited, they must act on the invitation.

- Policies must be devised in a way that is intersectional in approach to accommodate all people.
- Women need to ask themselves whether they are complicit in upholding and maintaining patriarchy and skewed power relations in effect becoming 'perpetrators of patriarchy'.
- Our society needs to help with information to remove ignorance. There remains a need for strong advocacy groups which will stand for women on all sorts of abuse they face however there continue to be challenges in formulating this.
- Need to engage with the younger generation in order to advance the cause of gender justice. Such sessions need to be present in secondary and tertiary schools in order to prepare the youth to be progressive in the future.
- Gender justice needs to translate both within the family and societal settings. Working with families is imperative as the initial work of gender justice and respect begins in the fundamental principles taught in the home. We need to start by treating both boys and girls equally in the home and at schools. We must abandon gender-specific chores in the home and gender-specific punishment or treatment at schools. Once gender equity is normalised, it will be transferred into managing gender justice issues in the workplace.
- This is the time to be radical. There is a need to understand the biases of the hegemonic system that suppresses the possibility of gender justice in the workplace.
- There is a growing need to build safety networks and institutionalise collective care in work spaces. Mandatory sensitivity and diversity training within the workplace remains vital to achieving gender justice.
- Need for feminists to work on personal development and confidence in order to assert themselves in problematic work spaces. In this, it must be stressed that the process of learning and unlearning is a long and painful process.
- We must be aware of our own privileges and make women's rights and its associated benefits accessible at grassroots level.
- We need to engage with single mothers outside the confines of the conference.
- Feminists need to mobilise themselves as well as oppressive bureaucracies and patriarchal cultures. There needs to be gender-based finance units that come up with funding for marginalised groups.
- Intersectionality matters. We need to address the issues impacting women beyond traditional vantage points now commonly referred to as "white feminism"<sup>26</sup>, including the layered oppressions that come with their race, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS status, culture and financial load as breadwinners within any given work space.
- Virtual offices are necessary as a possible solution in benefiting both employer and employee in allowing flexibility, for instance, when parental leave is taken.
- Women need to be supported with tools to learn methodologies to stimulate dialogue.

The dialogue opened up possibilities for participants to reimagine how gender justice should look in their work spaces and were given platforms to share their own experiences. Participants were instructed not to mention their rank and positions within organizations to encourage connections and solidarity across class lines. The methodology enabled us to see new possibilities of dialoguing in a way that is truly inclusive.

#### The main themes that emerged from Open Space:

- Women and Class
- The gender wage gap
- Race
- Perceptions of Women as Leaders
- Inclusive Spaces
- Care Work
- Gender and Policies
- Cultural Dynamics

<sup>26</sup> White feminism is a term that is typically used to describe the belief system of white, heterosexual, cisgender feminists who are criticised for not recognizing the greater degree of misogyny faced by women of colour, LGBTIQ+ women, women with disabilities, or women facing class oppression. It is referred to as white feminism because historically this type of 'colour blind' feminism was characteristic of first and second wave feminism in the west where feminists fought for women's right but excluded women of colour and entrenched and even supported racial oppression.





At an inter-generational women's retreat, women engaged in creative dialogue activities such as what is pictured here in Warrenton, Northern Cape.



# CONCLUSION

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

- **When doing gender justice work, positionality and identity of facilitators and project manager matters:**
  - a) The gender, linguistic, and class identities of the facilitator are important considerations in this kind of work. It is critical to be conscious and reflective of our identities, including sexual identity and race, and how that frames our work as facilitators, whether in noting its place in confirm or deconstructing societal power relations. This requires of facilitators to iteratively unpack and challenge their selves and identities, including the privileges we may or may not bring into a space. A methodology that centres participants' need to define for themselves gender on their own terms, language and space has been found, in this pilot, to work most effectively. Power relations cannot be ignored; fully connecting with participants requires additional work to break down the perception that I represented the racial group responsible for apartheid. Furthermore, language barriers and cultural barriers were additional challenges. Some of which were circumvented by co-facilitating with colleagues and working closely with local IJR ambassadors.
  - b) Despite the desire to hold men-only spaces, we found it challenging, as an all-female team, to credibly create these spaces. Gender Reconciliation International<sup>27</sup> facilitated a dialogue led by two men. To mitigate these challenges, partnerships are key and diversity of facilitators is essential to hold spaces that are safe.
- **While we attempted to have a “mile deep inch wide” approach, it was still too wide:**
  - a) Gender work asks people to go deep into their personal history and potential wounded memory to some of the more private and intimate parts of their life. This takes immense trust and relationship-building. In some communities, we were only able to visit once or twice which meant we could not establish the trust needed.
  - b) Even places where we visited four times, the time between visits was often too long to build meaningful relationships and follow up with participants. Working closer to participants or having stronger partnerships with local CBOS may mitigate these challenges in future and keep our contact more regular.
  - c) The goal was to take communities through all steps of the gender process; however, given the broad reach of this project, only 19 participants out of the 312 that we worked with went through all three steps. Our findings suggest that in order to make meaningful change we need to work in fewer places over a sustained period of time with the same group or groups.
  - d) Because of costs, visits were short and combined with other projects so gender justice work only had a day or two at a time. As a result, we could never implement the full methodology, rather, we only tested out a few processes. The burdens of time and money are particularly acute when we travel outside the Western Cape.
- **Safe spaces can easily become unsafe.**

One cannot stress enough the challenge and need to carefully establish trust in a space and implement activities that make people feel safe. Marginalized gender identities such as women and LGBTIQ+ persons can feel unsafe and negative past experiences can be triggered when in dialogue, especially with cis-gendered heterosexual men due to power relations and violence in communities.
- **We need methodologies and stories that originate from South Africa, rather than from Western Europe and North America.**

Most methodologies claim to be adaptive to any context; however, most are not appropriate or context-

specific for South Africa. Rather, we need to strengthen and share local stories and methodologies. GJR continues to research African feminist methodologies and build networks with activists and organizations developing such methodologies that are context specific.

- **Facilitation needs to adapt to the group with whom you are working.**

Participants need to have agency in the facilitation process and not be over-facilitated or controlled. This requires back-and-forth and check-ins between facilitators and participants, which may result in changing a programme or process to suit the immediate needs of the group.
- **The challenges of a multiplier effect in disadvantaged and marginalized contexts**
  - a) All of our work seeks to motivate participants to take forward the work in their own contexts – sometimes called the “multiplier effect.” This is especially true in the cases of IJR ambassadors who we identify as community agents of change. However, in many cases, people do not necessarily take the tools they have learnt in dialogue into their spaces of influence. More often than not, poverty and inequality make it very difficult for people to do so. Most do not have the basic resources to organize their own meetings, such as airtime or data to call people, safe streets for people to walk door-to-door, spaces they can use free of charge and money for refreshments. One woman explained that when she hosts a workshop for women, those women usually will not have eaten beforehand, so will need something to eat when she arrives.
  - b) The communities we work in are still divided by race both spatially and politically due to the legacy of apartheid. Despite our workshops being inclusive of different communities, once we leave, it is difficult for those communities to remain connected.
- **Dialogue alone is not enough.**
  - a) Most people we reach need access to employment opportunities and skills development. This poses a challenge for us in organizing dialogues around social issues, as people often come hoping they would incorporate skills training and work opportunities.
  - b) We need to partner with local community-based organizations (CBOs) to give tools to mobilize and organize to take issues raised in dialogue into action.
  - c) We need to work at the grassroots level in partnerships with local CBOs who have access to community intelligence. We need to create spaces where the ideals of reconciliation and the constitution can be realized and made accessible for people. There is a massive gap between policy, research and what is happening at community level.

## NEXT STEPS

The gender desk will engage in the following strategic directions:

- Our gender justice and reconciliation toolkit for dialogue documenting all our activities and methodology will be disseminated through various train- the trainer workshops. These workshops will be geared towards community leaders and community based organizations.
- GJR will continue to work to refine our methodology of working in the field of gender justice and reconciliation.
- Findings from our research in 2016 will be analysed and shared with government stakeholders.
- GJR will seek to build new partnerships and continue existing relationships with other organizations working in gender justice, reconciliation and peace building.
- GJR will continue to utilize IJR's platforms to share with all stakeholders the lessons learnt and research generated through our interventions, with the goal of influencing policy processes.
- GJR will continue to support community leaders working at local level to bring about change.

<sup>27</sup> See more on their work at <http://www.genderreconciliationinternational.org/workshops-trainings/south-africa-workshopstrainings>



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# APPENDIX: GENDER JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION FILMS, PUBLICATIONS AND OPINION PIECES

## Academic Research

*IJR commissioned Dr. Helen Scanlon, renowned transitional justice and gender expert, to draft a paper on the nexus between gender justice and reconciliation in the South African context.*

Scanlon, Helen. "Gender and the Politics of Reconciliation." Institute for Justice and Reconciliation. 2017. [http://ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Gender-and-the-Politics-of-Reconciliation\\_Helen-Scanlon\\_2016.pdf](http://ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Gender-and-the-Politics-of-Reconciliation_Helen-Scanlon_2016.pdf)

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Robertson, Megan and Leila Emdon. "Women can't be left out of reconciliation." *The New Age* - November 20, 2016. Pp.18.

## Short Films

### "Siyakha (we are building) Communities"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xmdmvr-VGjk&feature=youtu.be>

*In 2017 the gender project partnered with community based organization Siyakha Community Healing Forum to tour the Western Cape capturing stories on gender justice in both urban and rural communities. This film captures some of these stories and showcases the work that community leaders are doing to make a difference.*

### "What's your gender?"

Youth Film: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXUSE6OS\\_Ck](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXUSE6OS_Ck)

*As part of IJR's Ashley Kriel Youth Leadership Development Projects annual camp with youth leaders from the Western Cape, participants were invited to write, produce and direct a short film on issues around gender. This short film is the result of this production.*

## Contributions to publications

GJR has contributed to a chapter on gender for a train the trainer toolkit geared towards educators titled: "Teaching Respect for All: Training the trainer - a manual"

GJR contributed towards The Building an Inclusive Society Programmes publication titled: "Pathways for Connections: An emerging model for long term reconciliation in post-conflict South Africa".





