

Headline:

[VIDEO] A tale of two mothers: Inside the losses of South Africa's femicide epidemic

Blurb: Over half of all women killed in South Africa are murdered by their partners. Here are stories from two mothers who lost children to gender-based violence in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga — and what could have been done to prevent this abuse.

Dylan Bush & Joan van Dyk

Info slides

[In South Africa, one in four women \(aged 18 and older\) who have ever been in a relationship have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse by their partners.](#)

[In total, intimate partner violence makes up 56% of all women murder victims in the country.](#)

[But researchers argue that this number could be far higher.](#)

Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, South Africa**Clacy Sekome - Mother of Gloria Sekome**

That policeman said to me, 'if your daughter is with her husband there is no problem, he will bring her in the morning'.

Then I said no.

They are always fighting. But he said it's okay, we'll take it from tomorrow morning.

I went on Monday and found my [voice breaks] child.

[Cries]

I found my child lying there with her throat cut

Info slide

[South African women are 5 times more likely to be killed because of their gender than other women worldwide.](#)

Info slide over cutaway of Bushbuck Ridge Police Station

Between 2015 - 2019 murder in Bushbuckridge rose by almost 30% and rape by 10%.

[MediaHack]

Info slide over cutaway of Clacy in her garden:

Clacy Sekome's daughter, Gloria, was murdered by her ex-partner and father of their two children in September 2020.

Cutaway of children in the yard**Clacy Sekome - Mother of Gloria Sekome**

I don't know what to tell the child.

When they ask me where is my mother, I don't know what to say.

What should I say? Your father killed your mother, and is in prison?

Info slide over burnt house cutaway

Just a 15 minute drive from Clacy's house is what used to be the Mashego family home.

One night, Rachel Mashego's ex-husband flew into a rage, doused her home in petrol and set it alight, burning the house down with his children still inside.

Rachel Mashego

My daughter tried to save my sleeping son from the burning house.

She woke me and told me that her father is blocking the door.

[My ex-husband] wouldn't let her past to save her brother from the fire.

She was crying out to her father, saying, 'Papa, my brother is in the room, he is dying.'

My son's whole body was on fire and his father just stood there and watched him burn.

Info slide:

Tokelo Mashego died in hospital a few days after.

Rachel Mashego

He was so badly burnt that there was evidence of smoke in his lungs and internal burning.

Info slide

His father, Simon Mokgalaka, was released on R 500 bail the next day.

Akimo Mabuso - Social worker, Vuwiselo Victim Empowerment Programme - cutaway Bushbuck ridge footage 2018

You must remember Bushbuckridge is one of the rural areas with no job opportunities.

And many of us we have been struggling to meet our day to day ends.

Info slide

[Unemployment rates in Bushbuckridge are between 45% - 50%.](#)

[Many studies say that poverty aggravates intimate partner violence.](#)

Men who can't provide for their families are more likely to commit violent acts against those close to them.

[Alcohol abuse also drives intimate-partner violence – especially by men who are already abusive.](#)

Mashego's ex was always far more abusive when he drank.

Rachel Mashego

He was so badly burnt that there was evidence of smoke in his lungs and internal burning.

Info slide

It is possible to prevent the abuse Mashego faced.

Local projects such as Stepping Stones and Creating Futures have been proven to prevent violence against women and children.

But for such projects to work, staff working in gender-based violence prevention programmes must be trained well.

Organisations that run prevention programmes also need to have consistent funding for at least three years.

South Africa's first action plan on gender-based violence and femicide was launched in 2020.

But the plan itself may be underfunded.

Treasury allocated just R15-million for the next three years to roll out the plan.

Other departments have given R128-million.

It seems a small price to pay.

Gender-based violence costs South Africa between R20- and R40 billion a year.

Only 40% of the government's previous emergency plan on gender-based violence has been carried out.

But the new action plan already seems to be faring better despite initial delays caused by the COVID pandemic.

Between May and April 2021, the police placed 298 more detectives in teams that deal with family and sexual violence.

A team of law enforcement bodies (The National Prosecuting Authority, Legal Aid and the justice department) cleared 98% of backlogged gender-based violence cases in 4 provinces.

Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, North West and Limpopo.

The police have also started to build a database on femicide, called Femicide Watch, to help them catch and count such cases better.

Info slide over cutaway of Clacy at home
But this is cold comfort for mother's like Mashego and Sekome.

Clacy Sekome - Mother of Gloria
I can't sleep. I can't sleep.

ENDS