

# SANGOMAS FIGHT AIDS

Sangomas have been included into the fight against AIDS. AIDSCOM, a non-governmental AIDS education organisation, recently held a workshop with 95 Sangomas in the township of Nkowankowa near Tzaneen. *Ellen Elmendorp* was there to photograph the event



Getting serious! A Sangoma ready to roll the condom onto the artificial penis



Aai! The condom is on! What a sight. Sangomas listen as a speaker explains the importance of using condoms and how Sangomas can get the message of AIDS across to their clients ◉



Graphic by Maya Weeden

# It could be your child

**The statistics for child abuse are frightening, but not as frightening as it is for the thousands of children who are being abused.**  
**By Rosalee Telela**

**W**hile there are many different forms of child abuse, sexual abuse is the most commonly reported.

Lindiwe is one of thousands of children in South Africa who are sexually abused by their fathers or adults. Lindiwe's mother refused to believe her when she first told her mother what was happening.

"When Lindiwe told me, I did not want to believe her. I hit her and told her not to tell lies. It was very hard for me to believe that my husband, the father of my children, could do

something like this," says Sibongile, Lindiwe's mother.

"Lindiwe is 15-years-old now, and her father no longer abuses her. Lindiwe's uncle told my husband he would kill him if he ever touches her again.

"We never talk about what happened and I try not to think about it.

"But my daughter is still afraid of her father. She refuses to be left alone with him," adds Sibongile sadly.

Lindiwe is free from the abuse but will she ever be free of the memories of what her father did to her?

SPEAK talked to Jackie Loffell of the Johannesburg Child Welfare Society about child abuse

**SPEAK:** There are different views on child abuse. What are your views on it?

**Loffell:** Child abuse is any action that affects the physical, mental or emotional well-being of a child. It becomes child abuse when action should be taken to protect a child, and it is not. There are many different ways in which children are abused.

**Physical abuse** is something not everyone agrees on. Some people see corporal punishment as abuse, other people do not.

Another form of abuse is when children do not get enough or proper food. In some cases parents cannot give their children the nourishment they need because of poverty. This one can understand. But in other cases, children do not eat properly because they are neglected by their parents.

**Emotional abuse** is when parents or adults fail to see to the emotional needs of their children. Parents or adults may continually frighten the child, threaten to leave the child, or neglect to give the child enough love and attention.

**Sexual abuse** is the most common form of child abuse. It is important to remember that those who abuse children are not always monsters or someone you don't know. It could be, and often is, someone in your family or somebody close to you."

**SPEAK:** How can child abuse

be prevented?

**Loffell:** Children have to know they can trust you and speak to you about anything. You have to encourage children to say "NO". They have to be taught that they have a right over their bodies and that no-one has the right to abuse them.

It is important that abuse comes out into the open. Because there has been a lot of publicity around sexual abuse people are coming forward and saying they were sexually abused. Through this the silence has been broken. Many, however, are still too scared to speak about it.

**SPEAK:** What are the effects of child abuse?

**Loffell:** The majority of sexual abusers are men, and the majority of victims are girls. A lot of women who were abused as children suffer life-long depression until they go for help.

Many institutions that treat people with alcohol abuse have found that a very high percentage of their clients have a history of sexual abuse. A lot of women who were abused as children often find themselves with partners who abuse them emotionally and physically. Many of these women do not challenge the abuse because it has been part of their everyday lives for such a long time.

**SPEAK:** How does a person go about reporting child abuse?

**Loffell:** Speak to a member of the family you trust if you suspect that a child is being abused. If this is difficult you

could phone the Johannesburg Child Welfare Society or Childline.

Also, a parent who is abusing their child and wants help, could phone the same organisations.

When we take up a case of child abuse, a social worker will meet the family and the child, depending on what kind of abuse it is. We deal with the problem by trying to help rather than punish people. We speak to the parents and tell them we want to help the family work through their problem. Opening up is a very difficult thing but it is the only way this problem can be addressed. The process is a long one and it will depend on people's attitudes and the importance our society places on women, children and family life.



Photo by Rosalée Telela, SPEAK magazine

**Jackie Loffell –  
Johannesburg Child Welfare  
Society**

*If you are abusing a child, or know of a child who is being abused contact: Johannesburg Child Welfare Society or Childline on 0800 123 321. This is a toll-free telephone number. ☻*