

Targeted investigation reports 2023

Phokeng, North West:

Understanding transactional sex in communities near mines



Compiled by
monitors and
facilitators from the
Community
Monitoring School in
North West:

Kgang Moloko

Tebogo Dikale

Lehlohonolo Lesomo

Selapeng Mokgatle



Picture: Trauma Centre located at Phokeng police station – Tebogo Dikale on the picture

Picture taken by Kgang Moloko

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Background and Context | 2 |
| 1. Problem description | 3 |
| 2. Investigation results | 3 |
| 3. What are the views of stakeholders on the issues? | 7 |
| 4. Advocacy approach | 7 |
| 5. Action..... | 8 |

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the work of the Community Monitoring School Team in North West and all the people that help to carry out this targeted investigation by availing themselves for interviews and discussions. We thank the Bench Marks Foundation team for their support to the Community Monitoring School programme and Olebogeng Motene and Friederike Subklew-Sehume for the final edit and lay-out of this targeted investigation.

1. Background and Context

Phokeng village is situated in the Rustenburg town which has an abundance of platinum, chrome and other minerals. The village is a mining host area with a high number of mine workers and other industrial workers as tenants. There are no mining operations in the community but neighboring villages host operations of Implats, Rbplats, Glencore, Murray and Roberts and many more. The village has a high number of women that are unemployed or are in low paying jobs. These females depend on their male working partners financially. In mining communities we see a number of women and young girls choosing working males, especially mine workers for financial gain in the relationship. Such relationship are referred to as transactional sexual relationship. We find that most women do not refer to their relationship as transactional as they say it is a man's duty to take care of a women.

In Phokeng we find transactional sexual relationships among women who are coming from Phokeng, women who are jobseekers coming from other areas, women who came with their working partners and school going girls. In many cases the male with financial power is the dominant person in the relationship.

(Backrooms for rental – Picture 1 by Olebogeng Motene)



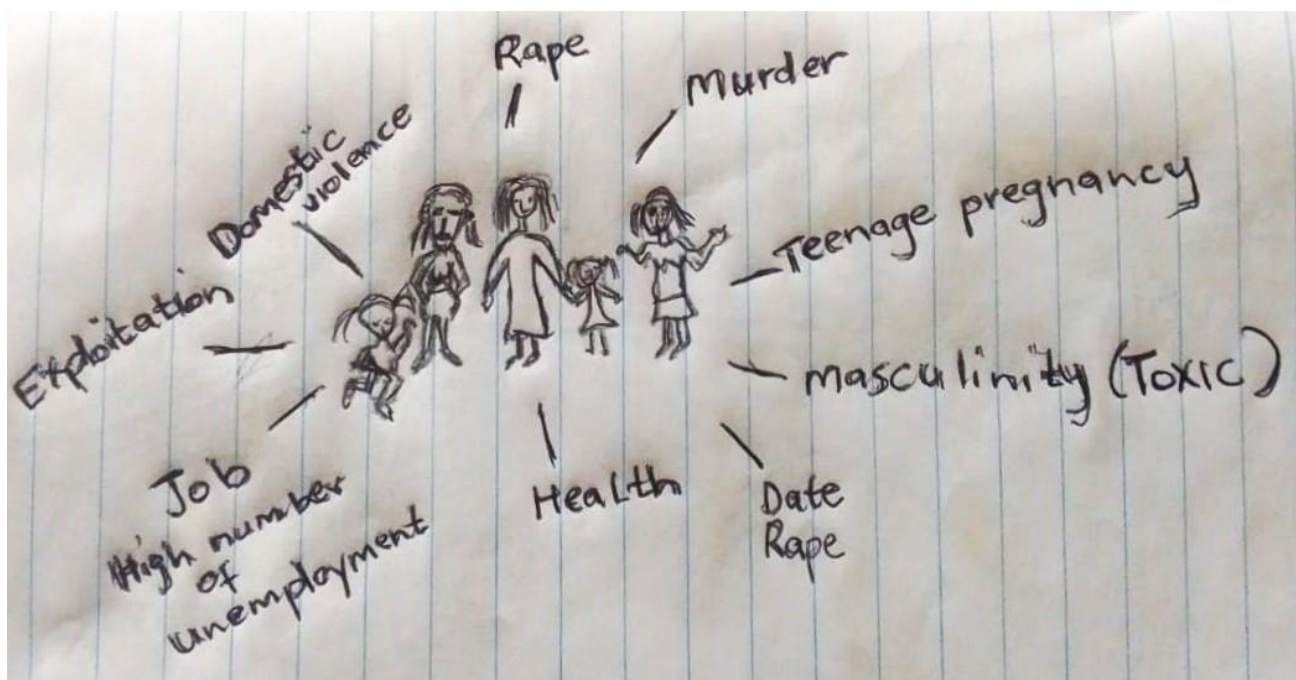
PrEp - Oral Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis is a pill used by HIV negative people. It is an Antiretroviral medication (ARV) best taken every day to prevent HIV infection but does not protect against other STIs. It starts to work after being taken 7 days in a row. It can be stopped anytime when the user does not need it anymore.

PEP - Post Exposure Prophylaxis is a short-term Antiretroviral treatment (ARV) that reduces the likelihood of HIV infection for HIV negative individuals after exposure to HIV infected blood of sexual contact with an HIV positive person. It is to be taken within 72 hours or within 3 days of exposure. PEP should be used only in emergency situations. It is not meant for regular use by people who may be exposed to HIV frequently.

Women in transactional sexual relationships are very often exposed to unprotected sex as the male partner with financial power dictates so. In order to protect the financial support, the woman gets from the male, she has limited choices to protect herself. PrEp taken every day is the best option for continuous HIV prevention for women in transactional sexual relationships. But PrEp will not protect them against other sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancies.

2. Problem description

In working on Gender Based Violence (GBV), it came to light that in our village there is low reporting on GBV cases. We found out that it is not because it occurs less but that it is not reported because a lot of partners, mostly women, depend on their partners for financial support and choose to rather not report them in situations where GBV occurs but to stay in the relationship for the financial gain. A number of women and girls enter into transactional sexual relationship as an option for survival or as a ticket to better living. A high number of women are not employed, are earning a low income, are single mothers who struggle to feed their kids or are from poor families depending on social grants.



Picture 2: Women we spoke to drew a map of challenges they face

3. Investigation results

We spoke to a number of women to better understand their situations.

Interviewee 1, Renamed Kagiso

Kagiso is a 43-year-old unemployed mother of 2 and currently expecting her third child. Kagiso was born and bred in Phokeng village. She dropped out of school due to her first pregnancy. She has never been formally employed due to not having her matric and no formal skills. She believes that the lack

of support on the home front contributed to how her life turned out. “I always had a conflictual relationship with my mother which worsened when I had my first child who is now in its early 20’s. I eventually moved out of a family home which roofs 5 generations and was always heavily crowded, which contributed to us always being at logger heads with each other.” She depended on odd jobs and social grants to survive and pay rent until she met her ex-partner whom she now pregnant from. “I met my ex-partner a year ago, and he came through for me, hey. He paid rent and other bills that gave me peace of mind.” Kagiso’s ex-partner works at Impala mine shaft in Luka village. Originally, he is from Limpopo. “He took care of me and my middle child. However, he always refused to use a condom and would accuse me of sleeping around when I ask that we use one. Now he denies that I am carrying his child. Hence the separation. And because I cannot afford my rent, I will be moving back home.”

Interviewee 2, Renamed Lesego

Lesego is a 35-year-old mother of one. She is part of the Community Work Programme (CWP) and resides in Phokeng with her family. She is currently in a relationship with a mine worker because she does not earn enough to afford her lifestyle. She says that she does a background check on a man who has an interest in her first to see if he will be able to provide for her before engaging with him. “I make sure I know where he works and what his position is because I honestly don’t see myself dating an unemployed man.” She adds: “CWP isn’t paying enough for me to take care of my son, so an unemployed man is a no go for me”. Lesego goes out most weekends and her partner buys her drinks and when he is on duty there are other men who will foot the bill. She uses protection when engaging in sex and has used PrEp from the Health Centre after a wild night of drinking and no protection. Lesego doesn’t regard her relationship as a transactional sexual relationship but as a normal one. She says that most women are in unhappy relationships because the relationship is financially beneficial and adds: “Think about it as a win-win. All men want sex even when offered love and care, they will go out for sex. So best I give sex and love and get money out of it.”

Interviewee 3 Renamed Tebogo

Tebogo, a 23-year-old women, originally from Borakallo in Zeerust lives with her family in a rental house. She passed her matric in 2020, currently she is unemployed and expecting her first child with her partner. “My partner is a contract employee at Bauba chrome mine working under SPH. He is 10 years older than me. He doesn’t make me feel like I am young but cultural norms bind me to be respectful towards him.” says Tebogo. She has never used any family planning method before. They have been together for 10 months. He has cheated on her once. She forgave him and they have never been happier. Her partner is a resident of Phokeng village and she believes that will be an advantage to her unborn child. “Bafokeng have many opportunities, bursaries, skills development and being a Mofokeng is standard requirement to get a job at the mines. So my baby will have it all.” said Tebogo with a smile on her face. She wishes to further her studies in media and journalism. She advices younger girls to study hard and condomise when engaging in sex.

Interviewee 4, Renamed to Miss 10 years

A 56-year-old mother of three, has been unemployed for over 30 years and celibate for 10 years. She joked and said she should be called “Miss 10 years”. She has two kids with different fathers. She was

married to one of her kids' fathers and adopted the third child. She has two houses in Gauteng that she rents out. That's her only income stream that sustains her and the family. "I have been single for 10 years and couldn't be happier." She shared that she enjoys her independence and prefers a 50/50 split kind of a relationship to avoid being controlled. She grew up seeing her mother having no control even on simple things such as her hairstyle, spending time with her kids while her partner would be out with his friends because he was a sole provider. "Some men even do groceries themselves and determine what's on the menu for the day and would become violent if a different menu is cooked, simply because he is the one who has buying power." Miss 10 years said. She adds: "The current norm is women are in relationships for money and there is a lack of respect in such relationships as one believes they have paid for illtreating you." Our children don't listen to their parents. They would rather burn their fingers than listen to us. "Bana ba rona ba utlwa wa manong molao." She believes that most kids are raised by parents who stayed together for the sake of the kids and are products of lack of respect and love. Miss 10 years says: "Young people, especially girls, should be protected by all means." This requires a collaboration between us as parents and our government to invest in the younger generation's education and skills development to ensure our kids are skilled enough to contribute to the economy."

Tebogo Dikale, a monitor of the Community Monitoring School, wrote in one of his alerts: At the end of March this year there was a parent-teacher meeting regarding bullying convened by Moremogolo Primary School Governing Body and the principal. The school and parents agreed on anti-bullying measures to implement. As am known to be an activist in the school, one parent requested to share a sensitive matter that needs urgent attention with me. It was about a 14-year-old primary school child who has transactional sexual relationships. She lives with her mother and two younger siblings in a rented room at Tshwara section in Phokeng. Originally, she is from Lesotho. Having been asked to assist, the parent and I waited for the young girl after school and spoke to her about her behaviour. She shared that she engages in sexual relations with men whom she believes to be in the 20's and 30's. She didn't know what she was involved in and thought the men love her. She introduced us to one of them and he was arrogant and clearly not remorseful of his actions. One of the elderly members of the community suggested to involve her mother who we couldn't find at first attempt but we managed to set up an appointment with her over the phone.

We also involved the Royal Bafokeng Administration law enforcement also known as Mapogo and they agreed to accompany us. As we met the mother, she tried to deny knowledge of the matter and later, we learned that she knew and played it down as she was benefiting from the money. When her daughter arrived, she had a R200 note in her shirt pocket. One law enforcement officer requested permission from the mother to engage the child and asked where she got the money from as she comes from school. The mother tried to mute her child by responding that the money is from one of their relatives that works as a domestic worker. The officer then requested that the mother allows the child to answer for herself. The child couldn't say where it is from and had an arrogant attitude.

After a long engagement with the mother, we suggested to speak to her daughter's teacher to check on her attendance at school. The mother then had a sudden change in attitude towards us as. She

said: “I need help most of the times as she doesn't sleep at home. Sometime and I get worried as the mother but because I am not a Mofokeng I know that I will mostly likely not be assisted.”

We suggested to the mother that it might be good to get a social worker involved and she agreed to the idea. The following week the Royal Bafokeng Administration "RBA" social worker from the clinic and the law enforcement (Mapogo) agreed to assist but sadly upon our revisit we found that the mother had moved her family elsewhere. We then visited the 14-year-old's school and learned that she has been skipping school.

In this case we tried to assist a young girl and her family to leave a transactional sexual relationship but as this presented a challenge to their livelihood, they decided not to take any support. We let go of the situation and hope our intervention did not make the situation worse for the teenage girl.

In our investigation we have seen that most mining companies do not have workers accommodation and provide their employees with living out allowances or housing allowance. This creates a demand for accommodation and as an income source. Those who have land build back yard rooms to rent out to tenants who are mostly mine workers. Given that women are often unemployed or in low paying jobs and the mining industry's labour force is male dominated, a high number of women enter into relationships for financial gain from the mine workers. We conclude that:

- A major contributing factor to the rise of this type of relationships is unemployment or low income of women due to them having no education and skills.
- Young women date older men, especially mine workers, to sustain a certain life style. The men can buy them expensive clothes and material things they need or want.
- Peer pressure to engage in this type of relationship plays a role for some of the girls as they are influenced by the materials things they see their peers have.
- Some girls are from poor families and are encouraged by their family to enter into this relationship.
- Miners brings better living conditions to their partners that influences other to consider or enter into these relationships.
- Some women are tenants and/or job seekers and their rent needs to be paid which leads to these relationships.
- Many of the young women do not use protection with their partners but rather use Oral Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEp), in order to keep their partners, and go for family planning.



(Picture 3: Tenants chairs left outside after drinking few beers while seated with their toddler – Picture by Olebogeng Motene)

4. What are the views of stakeholders on the issues?

Trauma Centre

On the 24th April 2023 we met with Oreabetse Ngubane, an intern, and Kabelo Mokgatlewabanameng, a social worker. Both are working at the Phokeng Trauma Centre which is located at Phokeng Police Station. Mr. Mokgatlewabanameng is also a member of an organization that works with gender issues in three ways: via a male only organization called Men of calibre, a women's organisation called Women of calibre and a combined one, where men and women come together, that is called Human of calibre.

The Trauma Centre is a safe and friendly place where victims are given support, counselling and privacy. Next to the Centre is a welcoming and comfortable room where a designated police officer takes statements from abuse victims before referring them to the Trauma Centre. The police officer indicated to us that only 40% of GBV cases are reported in Phokeng Village and shared that in other areas reporting is higher.

We had a follow up meeting at the Centre team on the 12th of May 2023 and learned that the dominant partner, the one with financial power, is usually male. Women are not reporting these cases as they depend on the male for financial support. Poor women go into these relationships for financial gain. Married women will stay in marriage for the sake of their children or financial support even when there is no more love.

Police

On the 24th April 2023 we went to the Police Station to ask for stats of gender-based violence cases and we were referred to the interim commander of the station Commander Ramodiro but he was not in office, went again on 19th July and could not get hold of him. On the 4th September 2023 he was in a meeting.



(Phokeng police station – Picture by Kgang Moloko)

5. Advocacy approach

Women to be included more in the labour force of local mines and we need increased education on sexual rights and education

We will involve relevant stakeholders to achieve our identified possible solutions listed below: -

- Royal Bafokeng Administration (RBA) and relevant government departments to prioritize education, skills development and training of women and youth. This to be in collaboration with companies that operate in and around. Capacity building programs to upskill woman to enable them to participate in self-sustaining/income projects through cooperatives funded by government and companies
- RBA to address the poverty problem in the village faced by unemployed and low-income residents by empowering women in agriculture and other income generating projects. This may be done by skilling, equipping women with relevant technology, knowledge and to allocate them land.
- Departments of Health and Education and NGOs to provide sexual and reproductive rights education for women, pregnant women and children.
- Call for the implementation of gender-neutral recruitment processes in local mining operations.

6. Action

Step 1: Present our targeted investigation findings in a discussion and information sharing session with 30 people in the community in September or October. We will invite the Trauma Centre, police, the Unemployment Forum, the General Kgotla, RBA office, Departments of Health and Education, School Governing Bodies and loveLife. The objective will be to present the findings and recommendations of this targeted investigation and agree on a way forward as a collective.

Step 2: Conduct a skills audit with the assistance of the Bench Marks Foundation research team to find out what skills do women in the community hold so we are able to advocate on that basis. We can build the questionnaire on a google docs form and collect data via door to door visits. Based on the data we can develop a women's only skills database and share it with the Unemployment Forum/local companies.

Step 3: Develop communication products to raise awareness. We will request assistance from the Departments for Health and Education to develop the materials.

We acknowledge and appreciate the support
from the following organisations:

Bread for the World

Church of Sweden

Ford Foundation

HEKS

Norwegian Church Aid

Raith Foundation

Southern Africa Resource Watch

Steelworkers Humanity Fund – Canada.

Issued by



Greenacres Office Park, Cotswold House

Rustenburg Road & Victory Road, Randburg 2196, South Africa

PO Box 62538, Marshalltown, 2107, South Africa

Email: info@bench-marks.org.za