

## Padare/Enkundleni – The Men's Forum on Gender, Zimbabwe

### BACKGROUND

Padare is an NGO that utilises the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe to begin to engage with men's sexual behaviour, and their interrelationships with women.

Jonah Gokova who expresses a commitment to a gender-just society founded Padare/Enkundleni in Zimbabwe in 1995. Padare comprises a central office with 13 satellite offices throughout Zimbabwe.

### OBJECTIVES

The Men's Forum on Gender in Zimbabwe seeks to:

- Create a forum for men to question and reject gender stereotypes and roles that privilege men and oppress women;
- Create a support group for men who are committed to change;
- Enable men to identify and challenge structures and institutions perpetuating gender inequality in our society.<sup>18</sup>

### APPROACH

Padare argues that prevailing notions of male roles and behaviour can be changed, both through open dialogue with women and through critical self-examination by men themselves. It works with men around the concept of taking responsibility for their actions.

### PROGRAMME OF ACTION

It operates public education and media programmes that include publicly discussing men's sexuality in schools, sensitising male journalists, and convening groups of men to discuss how their behaviour facilitates the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Padare recognises that notions of masculinity and femininity that encourage multiple sex partners for men, while discouraging frank conversations and education regarding sex, are at the root of the AIDS pandemic. Thus, the organisation has begun to work with men around their perceptions of sexuality. Deeply rooted in this are issues of power and control. When men are enabled to speak about the traditional cultural practice of 'dry sex' (which facilitates the

spread of the disease), or the commonly held belief that condom use is only for sex with prostitutes, then not only are behaviour changes marked, but attitudes and understanding about gender dynamics begin to grow. When men begin to understand how they themselves are caught within this gender paradigm, their commitment to change grows.

Gokova utilises these workshops to speak about the *disadvantages* of patriarchy. His belief is that men suffer in their own humanity because of 'pressure to project an image that is not naturally theirs and that is not sustainable.' This pressure limits both creativity, and a recognition of man's humanity. Padare addresses these issues by enabling men to get together to talk about the way they have been raised. Assumptions about women and men that have made men oppressive and which are unhelpful in creating meaningful relationships between men and women are examined. Sexuality is a site of expression of power, control and violence. By beginning to deal with expressions of sexuality, and the pandemic, which is exacerbated by these expressions, Padare has located an important entry point for discussions about men's understanding of and involvement in the gender movement.

Padare encourages and supports men who speak out publicly against gender stereotypes and risky sexual behaviours. This creates a safe space for men to begin to express their activism and commitment to a different way of being engendered. Within a context where this can be an alienating and disempowering experience, Padare gives support and encouragement.

### SUMMARY

**The Padare model views sexual health issues as a useful starting point in organising and enabling men to work against violence against women.**

**Their approach of understanding the links between sexuality, sexual health, and VAW can enable practitioners to find multiple sites of entry to effect social change, particularly in Southern Africa, where the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a critical social and economic issue.**

