

ILITHA LABANTU

People Who Care About People



Organisational Profile 2020



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Overview

Ilitha Labantu, established in 1989, is a social service and educational organisation that focuses on addressing violence against women and children and supporting those affected by it.

Founded by Mandisa Monakali, at its inception, it was the only organisation in the Western Cape that served to empower women in townships and to address issues related to domestic violence, political violence and the abuse of women and children's rights. With its head office in Gugulethu, Cape Town, Ilitha Labantu has grown from being an organisation run by a few committed women to establishing satellite offices in five provinces in both township and rural areas and is committed to increasing the scope of its work throughout the country.

Through individual and family counselling as well as skills training, empowerment and capacity-building workshops, Ilitha Labantu meet the needs of communities affected by high levels of violence and limited socio-economic opportunities. Located within the residential areas of its target group, the organisation provides easily accessible and inclusive services to gender-based violence survivors and the broader community.

As an experienced civil society organisation, Ilitha Labantu is a trusted advisor to government and community processes related to the prevention and elimination of violence against women and children and we use this platform to advocate for the implementation of grassroots solutions nationally and internationally.



Message from our President



30 years of championing the rights of women and children has been a difficult journey but we stand ready for the decades ahead.

Resistance, challenges and difficulties are well known to us; but thirty years after we first opened our doors, our achievements far outweigh the adversities that have come our way. When Ilitha Labantu began its work, we expectedly had resistance from men but were surprised that women too opposed us. As our work began to take root, it emerged that many of these women were experiencing domestic violence and did not know how to navigate their way out of these situations. These learnings from our early community engagement as well as from our history in the anti-apartheid movement where we brought together the women's brigades of the warring political parties to help bring peace, set us up for the long haul in reclaiming women's right to a peaceful existence.

While our operating context has evolved with greatly reduced political violence, poverty, unemployment and low levels of education continue render women financially dependent on men, exacerbate violence, and hinder men and women from achieving their socio-economic potential.

We therefore focus on providing immediate access to survivor support services including the provision of counselling and legal advice to those who need it; assistance with court processes such as filing in interdicts and court orders and importantly holding training sessions that enable women to participate in both individual and community development. Another critical avenue of our work is creating an open and supportive atmosphere for dialogue – bringing women together to talk freely about critical issues affecting their daily lives and share their own solutions.

Local actors, global thinkers

Though we operate out of the Western Cape, we always keep in mind to “think globally and act locally”. My personal experience at the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women, cemented this approach which has led to Ilitha Labantu’s extensive involvement nationally in policy development including the domestic violence act of 1998 and the sexual offences act of 2007 in tandem with representation at global forums such as the Commission on the Status of Women and, annually bringing together women from grassroots organisations to deliberate and strategise on the prevention and elimination of violence against women in peri-urban and rural communities. The results of these discussions have been subsequently presented at international forums and have resulted in policy shifts globally.

The war against women and children continues

In South Africa, we know that the war waged on women’s bodies is real. At the end of the 2017/2018 financial year, 2930 women had been killed – an 11% increase from the previous financial year. Many of these women killed knew their murderers. We must, in response, continue to wage an even more equipped war on domestic violence if we want healthy communities where women and children feel safe. We are pleased that our government declared gender-based violence a national emergency resulting in an action plan. However, we realise that the implementation of this plan depends on extensive coordination and importantly organisations at grassroots level must be adequately resourced for the plan to eventually lead to the required results.



And in our implementation, we certainly must not blame women for remaining in abusive situations as dependency and fear inhibit the choice to leave, but rather let us engage men who are the main perpetrators and seek accountability and justice from our legal system. Our work is therefore multi-layered and complex as dealing with access to basic needs – food, healthcare, and education is as integral to our success against the scourge of violence as is access to protection mechanisms and justice.

The next thirty years

As we look forward to the next thirty years we continue to seek partnerships that will enable our work to grow and evolve as our socio-political and economic climate changes. We are especially calling on the private sector and donors to play an even larger role to support Community Based Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations across the country that are fighting injustices against women and children and are standing up for the rights of vulnerable groups who often face intersectional discrimination.

We are grateful to the government departments, international donors and corporates that have supported us thus far to keep doing our work and making an impact in the lives of women and children in South Africa. Through our efforts, we have touched the lives of over 10,000 people. It has never been an easy road and we doubt that it will get easier but it is a worthwhile journey as along the way we transform the lives of women and children; of men; of families; of communities and of our country.

Mandisa Monakali

Ilitha Labantu Founder and President



PRUDENCE'S STORY

I have five children. The youngest two are girls. They were raped by my then sixteen year old son.

At the time I was dealing with another family matter where my cousin's young daughter was raped, also by my son. It was a difficult time for my family as here I was, a mother, caught up in a situation where my own child was being accused of raping a relative.

It never crossed my mind that the same had happened to my own two daughters, his sisters. I never noticed as they kept the secret so well. One day the younger of the two told my sister that their brother did the same thing to them too. I was devastated. I had no support system as at the time my husband had travelled out of the country. I had lost hope.

I confided in a fellow congregant who is a counsellor at my church about the painful situation at home and she referred me to Ilitha Labantu.

I was welcomed with open arms at Ilitha Labantu. I could talk to someone without being judged. They understood what I was going through. I was provided with counselling. I made sure I attended the sessions with the children as they needed help more than me. It is an ongoing process. I am glad that I was referred to Ilitha Labantu as one of my children had started suffering at school and dropped out. The teachers were always complaining about her performance. She is now doing well and attends school regularly.

I am indebted to Ilitha Labantu for the help we received.

Not her real name.





Our Vision, Mission, Philosophy and Guiding Principles

Our vision

To assist in the elimination of all kinds of violence especially those that occur in the domestic domain where the ideology of privacy is strong.

Our mission

We strive to end violence and abuse against women and children in disadvantaged communities. We provide emotional support, practical advice, education and training for coping with and addressing violence against women and children. We utilize interactive and inclusive methodologies in our education and empowerment programs

Our philosophy

- *Empathy*: awareness of power relations and respect for human rights
- *Confidentiality*: to protect and maintain client confidentiality
- *Professionalism*: Communicate, behave and execute all duties in a manner that enhances the positive image of Ilitha Labantu, to use available resources efficiently and effectively to stop the surge of violence against women and children
- *Listen*: to be able to listen attentively, supportively and objectively to a client
- *Assist*: to be able to assist each and every client at all times
- *Equality*: adherence to principles and practices that promote substantive equality
- *Integrity*: commitment and adherence to organizational values and gender equality
- *Accountability*: honesty, transparency and responsibility

Our guiding principles

- **Serving all** survivors of domestic violence and those supportive of them at any time, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, income, ability, religion or geography
- Providing **timely access** to services and programs
- Creating **a safe, welcoming and respectful environment** where survivors and their families can heal and grow working to end the
- silence surrounding violence against women and children, and to end the stigma found within our communities through outreach programs
- **Raising awareness** about how societal acceptance of oppression relates to the incidence of sexual violence
- Promoting **a work environment that empowers** each person to do their work to their fullest capacity; that supports each person in their efforts, and that inspires teamwork in order **to provide the best service to the community.**



Preventing and ending violence against women and children



Violence against women and children is a dimension that is widespread in South Africa – according to the 2017/18 police data, a woman is murdered every three hours and South Africa has one of the highest levels of intimate partner violence, affecting all socio-economic levels and ethnic groups. Particularly concerning is that violence has been normalised - violence and conflict have been interwoven in the fabric of South African society and manifest in a variety of mutually reinforcing ways. Attitudes about violence prevention are shaped by harmful norms which largely blame women for violence and does not call on men to account for their actions.

Gender based violence is continuing and increasing

Even after the dawn of democracy in South Africa over 25 years ago, and the adoption of the bill of rights, women are still living in the same conditions as before. Many women still face violence inside and outside their homes and continue to experience the same inadequate services and critical economic inequality. Gender-based violence is also a key driver for continued high levels of HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women. GBV also undermines social and economic progress, particularly in township communities and impedes the realisation of the National Development Plan and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Prevalent forms of gender based violence in South Africa



Physical and psychological violence (often in domestic environment)



Sexual offences including rape and sexual assault



Murder of women by their male intimate partners

Our solutions

Our solutions therefore seek to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence by empowering survivors, sanctioning perpetrators, seeking justice for victims, and working with communities so that they take the responsibility to recognise and denounce violence. Our work is guided by national comprehensive policy and normative framework which focuses on the elimination of gender-based violence in line with international standards. Our key pillar is therefore violence prevention with a focus on tackling the root causes of violence such as inter-generational poverty and negative gender norms and stereotypes.

“Domestic violence, rape, and the abuse of women remain disgraceful blots on the reputation of a country that is called a miracle nation in other respects.” - Nelson Mandela



Clinical programme
Walk-in service
centre for survivors



Employment Readiness
Building Bridges programme
closes the gap between
life experience and job
readiness



Policy and Advocacy
Para-legal services,
court support, and
lobbying



**Dorothy Zihlangu
Transitional House**
Providing three months
shelter for abused women
and their children



Outreach and Education
School visitations, public
awareness, community
workshops



**Comprehensive Food
Security**
Operating provincial food
distribution centre and 20
community nutritional
development centres



BUHLE'S STORY

On the 23rd of December 2017 my daughter went to visit her friend. When she arrived at her friend's house, she was met by her friend's male cousin who told her that her friend was in the backroom. He walked in-front of her saying that he will show her where her friend is, instead he raped her and threatened to kill her if she reported.

But my daughter told a neighbour who brought her home and we went to report to the police and went to the hospital for tests. Her friend's cousin was arrested on the same day. A few days later I saw him he was out of prison. My daughter was afraid to go out, she stopped taking public transport to school and she felt like everyone knew what had happened to her and that made her feel embarrassed. She found it difficult to concentrate at school.

On her second visit to the hospital, she was given a letter to take to Ilitha Labantu for counselling. I accompanied her to Ilitha Labantu where she met with the social worker who explained to her what counselling is and why it is important. She learned that she did not need to be worried about what people say or think about what happened to her. She also learned to talk to me and her siblings about feeling down and afraid. The counselling sessions also prepared her to speak in court when asked questions about the incident. Her school progress also improved. I also received counselling where I learned how to be supportive and with time, I also learned to leave behind my feelings of blame for what had happened to my child.

The social worker and the staff of Ilitha Labantu accompanied us as a family when we needed to go to court and my daughter was not afraid to see the person that had raped her because she knew he could no longer hurt her.



Not her real name.



Clinical programme



Perhaps the most urgent and crisis-driven aspect of Ilitha Labantu's work is to provide counselling to women, children and other vulnerable groups in townships and rural areas who have suffered abuse and violence. Ilitha Labantu focuses primarily on preventative and survivor support (secondary) measures.

- **Assessment and referrals:** We screen cases to assess their eligibility for Ilitha Labantu services and refer cases that do not meet eligibility criteria to relevant service providers.
- **Counselling:** We assist survivors of domestic violence and other violations to break the cycle of abuse by dealing with the trauma of abuse and developing coping skills to deal with their problems. We provide an atmosphere that allows women to heal emotionally and increase their capacity to regain self-confidence and a sense of purpose and direction.
- **Support groups:** Improving the mental and social well-being of survivors can be significantly improved when they express their feelings in an atmosphere that fosters mutual support and understanding. Support groups offer a platform for survivors of domestic abuse or those affected by it to discuss the dynamics of abuse and share their experiences often leading to their growth and development.



Policy and Advocacy



The core principle of our policy and advocacy work is to contribute towards the development of an *alternative poor gender policy framework* and support awareness raising on violence against women and children. A key component of this work is also the simplification of relevant legal options and procedures – ensuring that we educate our communities about the current laws that protect women, children and the elderly.

Para-legal activities: We provide legal advice and legal counselling to clients at the office and at court. This is done to empower women on relevant legal rights and court procedures. This is done face to face or telephonically. Conduct internal information sessions to equip staff members with the right information on prevailing laws and interpretation of Acts and also keep them up to date. Follow up on client cases and making proper referrals to appropriate institutions to avoid clients being sent from pillar to post. Liaise with investigating officers especially in rape cases and keep clients updated about progress in their cases.

Court support: We assist our clients to fill out protection order forms and also provide legal advice at court and referrals to appropriate institutions. In addition, we hold public educational talks at the court to enable community members to understand the justice system and increase their assertiveness on legal procedures. Together with our community network, we conduct court picketing especially in rape and femicide cases to provide support to affected families and communities, exert influence on relevant authorities, and draw attention to the continued scourge of violence against women and children.

Workshops: We regularly hold empowerment and educational training workshops in communities on relevant pieces of legislation and simple court procedures which helps to build public knowledge on critical laws and basic legal steps to seek justice. We direct community members to resources and we also use these talks to educate communities on domestic violence.

Lobbying and advocacy is critical to influencing policy makers and placing consistent attention on domestic violence and also to ensure improved integration of domestic violence issues with other issues such as crime, policing and social cohesion. We also engage with a close network of relevant stakeholders to ensure a coordinated effort and find collaborative solutions in order to deliver comprehensive services to the communities we support.



Outreach and Education



Our outreach program focuses on raising public awareness and empowering communities on issues affecting them directly. Among the communities we operate, violence against women and children often remains obscured by consensual silence and fear. Through our on-going awareness raising programmes in townships, we aim to create a supportive atmosphere in which people can address interpersonal violence openly in spaces that foster community cohesion such as schools, clinics, youth forums and churches.

School visitations: Our school visitation programme forms part of the existing Life Orientation subject at schools. The programme is delivered for both primary and secondary school learners, usually below the age of 18, and tailored for children who live in communities where violence and abuse have been normalised. These children are highly likely to experience physical violence, swearing and bullying as part of their school careers and may consider them to be normal behaviours. The programme educates children and youth about their rights, individual responsibilities, moral obligations as young citizens, and speaking out against violations of their rights or those of others. Topics include children's rights, sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, HIV/Aids, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, among others. These vital lessons are conveyed in a fun and approachable manner such as role playing, puppet shows, debates, drawing (and analyses) and presentations. As the topics are discussed among their peers, the children are given the space to think, analyse, work as groups and express their views and opinions including their challenges and frustrations. The overall aim is to build up youth that are sensitised and socially conscious – being both vigilant and assertive as well as responsible for their actions.

Public awareness: Informing communities about the scourge of violence and how to stop this common human rights violation is of critical importance to Ilitha Labantu. We utilise a multi-faceted approach to convey this information including talks, workshops, street parades, posters etc. to maximise the impact of our message. An informed public is central to creating community support and partnerships to prevent domestic violence, child abuse and neglect. Our messaging is positive - we focus on the many ways communities can support and strengthen families – and is tailored to the perspectives of our target audience.

Community workshops: Our workshops provide community members with the opportunity to learn about domestic violence and abuse and how to prevent it or report it. These sessions are an avenue to develop skills such as public speaking, literacy, and problem solving and boost self-confidence as participants take an active approach to decision making and ending or preventing violence in their sphere of influence.



Employment Readiness - Building Bridges

Building Bridges is a unique employment training initiative designed for abused and young women – many of whom have experienced early pregnancy. The programme takes a holistic approach to employment preparation by addressing the individuals' physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs in the way she approaches learning and employment.

Specific objectives of the programme include:

- Assisting women to break the cycle of abuse by moving from being dependent to being self-directed and independent.
- Providing specific training in “bridging” or transferable skills to improve learning potential and further training or employment opportunities
- Enabling abused women and young mothers to develop and implement their plans for employment and economic independence.
- Facilitating the ability of the women to support themselves and their families.

The programme works to close the gap between life experience and job readiness by offering counselling as well as skills development with a focus on increasing the participant's self-esteem and creating a drive for independence and self-reliance. The goal is for women to be ready for regular employment or self-employment and reduce their levels and unemployment and dependency.



Dorothy Zihlangu Transitional House

The Dorothy Zihlangu Shelter operates as a transitional house programme offering immediate shelter specifically for battered and abused women and their children for up to three months.

Any woman, with or without children, who has been physically, emotionally, verbally, financially, psychologically or sexually abused are welcomed into the transitional house. The house also assists women who want to remove their children away from abuse at home. In addition to temporary accommodation, women are also offered psychosocial support to women so that they can move on successfully with their lives after leaving the house. These services include: counselling and advice; crisis intervention; legal advice; referrals services; training and education and access to support groups.



Comprehensive Food Security



Ilitha Labantu's Comprehensive Food Security Programme and Food Distribution model focuses on strengthening community organisation for social health and local economic development. We rely on our holistic community-driven approach to development in creating food secure communities by focusing not only on the immediate provision of meals through food support programmes but also linking in job creation initiatives and rehabilitation services for vulnerable women and children affected by domestic violence who have become food insecure.

The objectives of Ilitha Labantu's Comprehensive Food Security Programme include:

- Ensuring access to food for poor and vulnerable community members
- Improving the nutrition security of citizens
- Improving the food production capacity of households
- Developing market channels for emerging farmers and communal gardens through bulk government procurement programmes of food and private sector markets
- Fostering partnerships with relevant stakeholders within the food supply chain
- Enhancing safety nets and food emergency management systems
- Job creation and skill training programmes for food insecure communities with a specific focus on women and the youth

Provincial Food Distribution Centre: Ilitha Labantu in partnership with the Department of Social Development (DSD) established and operates the Provincial Food Distribution Centre which distributes food to all Community Nutritional Development Centre's throughout the provinces in a timely manner. Food handlers working in the Provincial Distribution Centre have been trained to adhere to the food safety rules as set out by the certificate of acceptability issued by the local municipal authorities.

Community Nutritional Development Centre: Ilitha Labantu's food distribution model comprises of setting up and operating Community Nutritional Development Centre's which ensure access to nutritional food for vulnerable and food insecure households. These community-based feeding centres operated by local community-based organisations (CBOs) with our support, provide cooked nutritious meals to vulnerable and food insecure members of the community in a shared space. The centres have kitchens equipped with cooking and catering equipment and meals are served during lunchtime, five days a week.



Our global presence

Ilitha Labantu forms part of the Civil Society National delegation of the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) conference - a commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide.

In the lead-up to CSW, Ilitha Labantu organises community dialogues and consultative forums where women activists at grassroots and national level discuss issues, challenges and recommend solutions. The report from these consultations are presented at CSW during high-level meetings and side events involving senior government officials, international civil society organisations and development institutions.

Working with Statistics South Africa, we are also active in tracking and reporting on key indicators related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - particularly Goal 5 on Gender Equality - including the economic, social, legal and customary barriers holding back women and girls that need to be addressed in order for South Africa to meet this goal by 2030. Additionally, we work with government and international organisations to ensure that civil society plays a prominent role in SDG implementation.

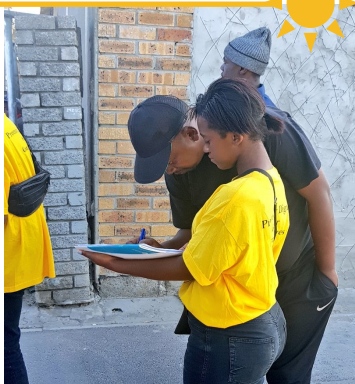
In 2019, Ilitha Labantu also hosted its International Conference on ensuring access to justice for victims of violence and abuse as well as the inaugural Ilitha Labantu Annual Lecture which was delivered by UN Women Executive Director, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. These initiatives among others continue to cement our role in promoting global and intersectional exchange and identifying key learnings between countries and between sectors to safeguard and advance the rights of women and girls across the world.



International Conference Highlights



Outreach Highlights



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