

## **Women's Day - Relationship between sexual violence and societal values**

With August being National Women's month, the Web and Media Technologies<sup>1</sup> of the Medical Research Council (MRC) has emphasized the correlation between the level of sexual violence and societal values as part of their AfroAIDSinfo project.

One of the outcomes of the project was a live interview with Dr Naeema Abrahams, Deputy Director and a Senior Specialist Scientist at the Gender and Health Research Unit of the MRC. In her interview with HeartFM in Cape Town, Dr Abrahams communicated her views on the impact of societal values on sexual violence.

When asked how women are viewed in the South African society, Dr Abrahams pointed out both public and private spheres of viewing women. With regards to the public sphere, there have been remarkable changes in terms policies and laws, for example; gender equality, gender justice and abortion laws, but when one looks at the private lives of women, one cannot confidently see the impact of these policies in the lives of women. "If one looks at the indicators on the level of sexual violence against women, surely our society does not value women, particularly poor women", remarked Dr Abrahams.

In her response to the question on the importance of the role of both parents in preventing child sexual abuse, especially the girl child, she pointed out that statistics indicate that a lot of children are facing much hardship. In paving the way to alleviate this fate among children, she referred to the issue of parenting. In our society, the role of parenting, to a larger extend is exclusively assigned to women "Children should be our valuable assets and should be protected particularly by men, in which mostly they are the perpetrators. As parents, we definitely need the right information and skills in order to make a difference in our children's lives"- Dr Abrahams concluded.

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<sup>1</sup> The Web and Media Technologies is a division in the MRC's eHealth Research and Innovation Platform and applies a convergence of Information and Communication Technologies to inform and raise awareness of specific health issues among communities. Its AfroAIDSinfo Project has an online presence in the form of an AIDS information portal at [www.afroaidsinfo.org](http://www.afroaidsinfo.org).

