

## **Housing Issues Can Also Cause Abusive Strain on Children**

By Thabitha Lillian Nena

22 April 2026

In South Africa, children still growing up experience a lot of mental health trauma because of our health and living conditions, especially in small living quarters. People and children in our communities are exposed to gender-based violence (GBV). In some homes, the minors are exposed to abuse, including many women and sex before age. This is due to a lack of privacy for many families crammed in small living spaces, often without private rooms inside.

Some children end up thinking that these things are the norm because they see them happening daily. The home situation also plays a big role in our lives. Some children see their parents doing drugs, while others are exposed to early sexual activities. It is clear that our living conditions may affect the next generation.

While the size of the living space does not determine the type of relationship in a home, such as GBV, many children in small homes become exposed to parents fighting. When parents smoke, being obviously intimate with each other, siblings bathing in front of one another, may lead to the loss of innocence for the age the child is in. And they take up responsibilities that are not theirs as children, because of seeing the father or mother abusing the other.

Such children grow up with trauma. These things easily lead to depression, disrespect toward your sister or brother because they bathe in front of you.

Sometimes men (fathers) return home drunk, making noise. This situation is unavoidable, and children cannot be protected from it in single-room houses. In such cases, the drunk parent shouts the whole night, and the next morning, the child must go to school, whereas they do not get quality sleep. At times, they can hear the mother crying the whole night. The likely result of this is that the child loses focus at school and starts to bully others. I believe that a home is an environment that has a big impact on children. How our children behave in public is mostly influenced by our daily lives at home.

What parents expose their children also plays a big role in the community. Many children end up in the streets smoking, doing illegal drugs, shooting, robbing, killing, and raping. This is because of different influences and exposure when growing up. The change can come from an environment of love, respect, and families getting space for privacy in their homes.

Raising a child in a house that is clean, safe, and has enough space available is the dream of any parent. Otherwise, such living conditions as discussed above structure and mould a child into believing that is what they are exposed to is all there is to life. How will you study when all you think about at night is how your mom and dad had a fight, or how naked sister was, or hearing your father drunk all night? I hope and ask that one day there can be solutions for homes to be provided to children. Their futures depend on the level of development at the home children grow up in. Let the home be the first place to be investigated.

*This article was submitted on 16 April 2026. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online ([www.Karibu.org.za](http://www.Karibu.org.za)), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.*