



GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AT WORKPLACE

There is no doubt that South Africa has made significant progress towards achieving gender equality since 1956, when 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August in protest against the extension of Pass Laws to women. Activists rebelled against a patriarchal system designed to control women and reduce them to submissive beings at the mercy of men. As part of the global movement towards achieving gender equality by 2030, South Africa celebrates this year's Women's month under the theme: "Generation Equality – Realizing Women's Rights for an Equal Future".

Today, South Africa's progressive laws have seen more women serving in high-ranking positions in government than ever before. Access to education by young girls and women has improved substantially over time. Recent statistics¹ depict a balance in gender parity ratios (GPR) amongst those who are functionally literate from 0,95 in 2002, to 0,99 (zero – no gender equality to one – full gender equality) in 2019, indicating that more women are now literate.

In SA and globally, one of the biggest challenges facing women is educational inequality. Access to education has played a pivotal role in ensuring that women have progressed to higher education levels. According to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2019 country report, GPR for female

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KZN 435

participation in tertiary education was 1,39 during 2016, underpinning the fact that significant strides have been achieved in ensuring universal access to education for everyone.

Umzimkhulu Municipality partnered with its strategic stakeholder, Lifeline, Red Cross, Umzimkhulu COWEP including Department of Social Development in ensuring there is integrated approach towards curbing gender-based violence in our society. It is furthermore on that note that the municipality has found it proper to ensure that creating an enabling environment for female growth within its ranks become fashionable. Municipality highly gender mixed in its recruitment hence there are more than 200 employees, therefore internalising this programme is paramount. Through the Honourable Mayor, Cllr. Jabulile Msiya, the council took a rather bold step towards internalising the fight against gender-based violence and further capacitate its employees.

The municipality has found it proper to profile and identify stakeholders that are key on fighting this societal crippling tendency. In different aspects, Umzimkhulu is highly affected by the gender-based violence related cases. Some of these cases are not spoken about during to ignorance, intimidation, and other regrettable reasons. The recent GBV Awareness Campaign and dialogue added value to its beneficiaries as they better understood each other. This programmed had been traceably impactful as the stakeholders took their voices to the doorsteps of both SAPS and Department of Justice whereby, they tabled evident personnel and resource transformation. The desired transformation had been identified as key towards changing the environment and further curb the rife gender-based violence related cases in through the rurality of Umzimkhulu. It was inspiring and motivational to witness matured yet deep expressions from all participants and how the destined government institutions received the memorandum.