Newsletter

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GBVF RESPONSE FUND

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Welcome

Welcome to the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Response Fund's Newsletter. Together, let's stay informed, engaged, and committed to creating a world free from violence and inequality.

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Message from the outgoing CEO

Sazini Mojapelo
Outgoing CEO, GBVF ResponseFund1

Dear Stakeholder,

As I sat down to write this note from Nairobi at the end of November, in my last week as CEO of the Fund, I felt a surge of emotions.

All of you have played a role in my growth since I joined the Fund in November 2022. In the weeks since my departure was announced, I've heard from so many of you. No words describe how much your good wishes mean to me.

I've been in a reflective mood and recently re-read my message to you in our first Newsletter.

"My motivation for joining the Fund was to contribute to addressing one of the most significant social challenges in our country," I wrote at the time. "I firmly believe that achieving gender equality is impossible when women and girls do not feel safe at home, school, or work due to the scourge of gender-based violence (GBV)." I saw and continue to see the work of the Fund as an incredible opportunity to support positive change.

And over the last two years, that's exactly what we've done.

Looking to the future, I do not doubt that the team will continue with this mammoth task.

Zanele Ngwepe, who has taken over from me, is a great choice as interim CEO and one of the hardest-working, most humble people I know. A leader who knows our business inside and out and is exactly the right person to lead the Fund at this moment until the Board identifies a suitable successor.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all our stakeholders, the Community-Based Organisations we partner with, and the organisations that have supported us with their generous donations and commitment to the Private Sector Coalition. Your involvement and dedication are invaluable.

> **"MY MOTIVATION FOR JOINING THE FUND WAS TO CONTRIBUTE TO ADDRESSING ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN OUR COUNTRY"**

I also want to thank my colleagues for their vital contributions in ensuring that the Fund remains a force for good. You have helped make this Fund as impactful as it is today, and you have taught me so much through your ingenuity, commitment to excellence, and passion for serving our communities.

I wish you well as we continue our work toward eliminating GBVF, driving systemic change, and building a future where our women and children are safe.

Serving our country as CEO of the Fund has been an honour. I will keep a close watch on your progress as I continue my work.

All of the best.
Sazini Mojapelo

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Message from the Interim CEO

Zanele Ngwepe
Interim CEO of the Fund

Dear Stakeholder,

At the end of November, we bid farewell to Ms. Sazini Mojapelo, whose leadership and vision have been invaluable to our team and the sustainability of the Fund. As a tri-sector leader, she was instrumental in establishing the Fund in 2021, working closely with the inaugural Chairperson and Board members. Her open-door policy and willingness to listen made us feel heard and appreciated. While we will miss her insights and guidance, we wish her the best as she embarks on her new global role.

I would like to thank our Chairperson, Ms. Faith Khanyile, and the Board of Directors for entrusting me with the leadership of the Fund as they begin the process of selecting a successor for the CEO role. You can count on my unwavering passion and commitment to maintaining the momentum of all our initiatives. I will ensure a seamless transition and will work closely with the team to deliver on the mandate of the Fund.

As we embark on this new chapter, our purpose and mission remain unchanged: to combat GBVF in our country. The Fund, in partnership with all our stakeholders, plays a critical role in making this a reality in our lifetime.

Looking back at the last quarter of the year, we proudly announced the formation of the Private Sector Coalition Against Gender-based Violence and Harassment in the Workplace (PSC). The launch took place at a Symposium in Johannesburg, hosted by the Fund in collaboration with our convening partners, including the Presidency, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). The event was attended by several CEOs and senior leaders across various industries, as well as key stakeholders such as Government and organised labour.

> **I WILL ENSURE THE SEAMLESS TRANSITION AND WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH THE TEAM TO DELIVER ON THE MANDATE OF THE FUND.**

We commend the corporates who have already committed to joining the Coalition, including SNG Grant Thornton, Anglo American, KPMG, PwC, Standard Bank, Mercedes-Benz South Africa, MTN South Africa, and BP Southern Africa, along with media partners SABC and SuperSport/DStv. The leaders of these companies made public pledges that are not just symbolic but demonstrate a genuine commitment to driving transformation within their organisations. You can click here to view their recorded messages of commitment, which formed part of our media campaign for this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

During Pride Month, we reflected on 35 years of LGBTQIA+ advocacy in Africa. We hosted a lively webinar in collaboration with the Mail & Guardian, where journalist and transgender activist Ditshego Didintle Ditshego led a discussion with a distinguished panel of experts.

Together, they explored the ongoing impact of violence on the LGBTQIA+ community and examined how stigma and barriers continue to affect this marginalised group. This is a webinar worth watching; click here to access the recording.

The Fund also revisited the iconic DStv Delicious Festival in September, where we unveiled our RESPECT campaign a year ago. Our team created a RESPECT Safe Space at the Festival, offering attendees a place to engage with the campaign, gather information, and recharge, despite the event being held on the coldest weekend of the year!

The RESPECT campaign will continue to forge strategic partnerships, building on a social behavioural change strategy. The next phase will focus on calling for action from individuals, organisations, and communities to actively foster environments where respect, dignity, and safety are non-negotiables for all.

Towards the end of 2023, we launched our second call for proposals, RFP2. Following thorough adjudication, with our new grant management partner Soul City Institute, we awarded grants to
132 CBOs with R90 million committed for the next two years.

Looking ahead, our ongoing focus will be to support CBOs in under-resourced hotspot areas, a proven mechanism for community-led and sustainable responses to GBVF. In partnership with UNFPA, we will continue our capacity-building programmes, helping CBOs gain the management and organisational skills necessary to drive impactful programmes.

We will continue supporting the National Prosecuting Authority's (NPA's) Thuthuzela Care Centre (TCC) initiative. The TCCs provide biomedical care, psychosocial support, and legal assistance to survivors of GBVF. In collaboration with the NPA, the Fund will help refurbish two sub-optimal TCCs and sites in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape have been identified for re-accommodation, with reopening scheduled for 2025.

Many NPOs aspire to change the world, but few have the necessary combination of talent, resources, and perseverance. We have proven we have all three in abundance. As interim CEO, I couldn't ask for a better foundation.

Let's continue to build on this foundation together.

Zanele Ngwepe, Interim CEO



UN team at the PSC Symposium



Koketso Rathumbu
Advocacy and Communications Manager

1. What inspired your decision to join the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Response Fund (the Fund), and how has that motivation evolved since you started this part of your journey?

What inspired my decision to join the Fund was a deep-rooted passion for addressing social developmental challenges that hinder progress in society, particularly those that demand collaborative and socio-behavioural approaches. Throughout my career, I have witnessed how structural barriers, stigma, and societal inequities perpetuate harm and marginalisation, especially for vulnerable populations such as adolescents, young people, and LGBTQIA+ communities. Joining the Fund was an opportunity to channel my skills and experience into a cause that aligns with my belief in collective action and the power of advocacy to drive transformative change.

Since starting this journey, my motivation has only deepened. Working at the intersection of advocacy, communication, and programmatic leadership, I have come to appreciate even more the importance of partnerships in creating sustainable solutions. I have seen firsthand how inclusive, evidence-based strategies can shift social norms, influence policy, and amplify the voices of those most affected by GBVF. My role allows me to combine my technical expertise with a commitment to fostering empathy, dignity, and equity, which continues to fuel my drive to make a tangible impact.

This experience has reinforced my belief that addressing GBVF and other societal challenges requires not just solutions but systemic change. It has been incredibly rewarding to contribute to an organisation that is not only committed to responding to immediate needs but is also shaping a future where every individual can thrive, free from violence, harassment and discrimination.

2. Before joining the Fund, what professional experience and roles shaped your career and how do they contribute to your current role?

Before joining the Fund, my career was shaped by diverse roles that combined technical expertise, advocacy, and programmatic leadership. As a National Youth Ambassador for the South African National AIDS Council, I led initiatives focused on HIV prevention, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and gender diversity. This role involved collaborating with government and international partners to develop strategies for adolescents and youth, contributing to national policies, and facilitating youth-centered consultations.

Building on this experience, I served as the Acting Technical Lead for the Adolescent and Young People (AYP) Programme under the Global Fund at SANAC. In this capacity, I provided strategic oversight for HIV prevention, care, and treatment programmes. I spearheaded the development of performance frameworks, implementation plans, and operational strategies while managing provincial teams and fostering partnerships to address structural barriers affecting AYP.

I also gained invaluable experience in regional and international contexts. As a Programme Advisory Member for the Global Fund's Her Voice initiative, I ensured grassroots grants

addressed safeguarding and inclusivity while supporting global discussions on AGYW needs. Additionally, my collaborations with entities such as UNESCO, UNFPA, and UNAIDS have equipped me to navigate cross-sectoral partnerships and align local priorities with international development goals.

These experiences shaped my ability to lead impactful advocacy and communication strategies, as required in my current role. They have honed my expertise in addressing systemic inequalities, fostering regional and global collaborations, and driving inclusive interventions for marginalised groups, including those affected by GBVF. This foundation allows me to create targeted, sustainable solutions that amplify vulnerable voices and inspire collective action.

3. Considering your unique perspective, how do you believe we can enhance greater collaboration to realise the mandate of the Fund?

Enhancing greater collaboration to realise the Fund's mandate requires a deliberate commitment to multisectoral, prevention-informed approaches that bring together diverse stakeholders including government, civil society, the private sector, and international partners. Collaboration should center on aligning efforts to address the root causes of GBVF while integrating prevention strategies that promote equity, respect, and social cohesion.

A key strategy involves strengthening community-led systems that are closest to those affected by GBVF. Investing in capacity building for grassroots organisations and community leaders is essential to foster local ownership and drive meaningful change. By equipping communities with the tools, knowledge, and resources they need, we can create sustainable, context-specific solutions that address systemic barriers and build resilience. This approach empowers those on the frontlines but also ensures that our interventions remain relevant and impactful over the long term.

Finally, achieving the Fund's mandate requires embracing holistic societal and organisational transformation. This includes promoting policies and practices that embed gender equity and human rights at all levels while fostering accountability and transparency in our systems.



Koketso Rathumbu, interviewed during the Human Rights Festival.

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Advocacy Work

The Advocacy and Strategic Partnership Portfolio reached significant milestones which signified continuity and resilient responses to gender-based violence not only at community levels but also in the workplace.

The launch of the Private Sector Coalition against GBVH in the Workplace

The launch of the Private Sector Coalition Against Gender-Based Violence and Harassment in the Workplace marked a pivotal milestone in advancing the Fund's mission to foster workplace transformation and mobilise corporate leadership in the fight against GBVF.



Multisectoral stakeholders at the PSC Symposium

Launched at a symposium in August 2024, to commemorate Women's Month, the gathering convened industry leaders, policymakers, government, labour formations, civil society and other key representatives to demonstrate the multi-level partnership of ensuring safe equitable and inclusive workplaces. The event provided a platform to outline the objectives of the Coalition, including the promotion of gender-responsive policies, the ratification of ILO Convention 190, and the development of collaborative strategies to address workplace harassment and violence.

GBVF x LGBTQIA+ Intersectionality Webinar

The second instalment of the Fund's GBVF Intersectionality Webinar Series, hosted in partnership with Mail & Guardian, underscored the intersection of GBV and the challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community.

The event gathered insights from civil organisations, including Pride of Africa, Parents, Families and Friends of South African Queers (PFSAQ), and the Social, Health and Empowerment Feminist Collective of Transgender Women of Africa (S.H.E), as well as the head of Governance and Human Development from the European Union Delegation to South Africa, Wits RHI, and the Legal Resources Centre.

Through in-depth discussions, panelists shared advocacy strategies, collaborative opportunities, and essential recommendations to enhance policy and programmatic support for LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly the transgender community.

The Fund and Sasol join hands for the Mandela Day 67 minutes campaign

In honour of Mandela Day and the spirit of giving, the GBVF Response Fund partnered with Sasol to dedicate 67 minutes towards addressing food security. This meaningful collaboration saw teams assemble and distribute nutritious food parcels to vulnerable groups, including child-headed households and elderly caregivers. meaningful collaboration saw teams assemble and distribute nutritious food parcels to vulnerable groups, including child-headed households and elderly caregivers.

The focus on these communities underscored the importance of collective action in creating a tangible impact. Together, the Fund and Sasol reaffirmed their commitment to uplifting those in need and advancing sustainable solutions to rising food insecurity, embodying the legacy of compassion and unity inspired by Nelson Mandela.



GBVF Team participating at the Sasol 67 minutes initiative

Walking the Talk Against GBVF

The GBVF Response Fund proudly participated in the 702 Walk The Talk, uniting to send a powerful message: enough is enough. The Fund's team marched in solidarity against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, reaffirming their commitment to creating a safer, more equitable society for all.

The event served as a poignant reminder of the power of collective action in driving meaningful change. As we marched together, we called on everyone to rise and claim their role in the fight against GBVF, celebrating the strength that comes from standing united for a common cause.

Embracing pride and progress:
Reflecting on 35 years of LGBTQIA+ advocacy in Africa

By Koketso Rathumbu, Advocacy and Communications Manager, GBVF Response Fund

On the last day of October, shortly before 16 Days of Activism, the GBVF Response Fund hosted a lively webinar in collaboration with the Mail & Guardian where journalist and transgender activist Ditshego Didintle Ditshego led a discussion with a distinguished panel of experts. Together, they explored the ongoing impact of violence on the LGBTQIA+ community and examined how stigma and persistent barriers continue to affect this marginalised group.



Intersectionality Webinar on GBVF and LGTQIA+ issues

October marked a powerful moment in our collective history as we commemorated African Pride Month, a time to honour the milestones of LGBTQIA+ rights across the continent. This month also marked a significant historical moment in South Africa and beyond our borders: the 35th anniversary of the first Pride march on the African continent, held in Johannesburg on 13 October 1990.

The inaugural Pride march was not just a celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community, it was an act of defiance against the oppression, violence, and discrimination faced by queer individuals at the time. It was a bold statement of resistance that has since sparked a movement that continues to grow and evolve across the continent.

The harsh reality: Legal protection versus social attitudes

South Africa's legal framework has often been lauded as one of the most progressive in the world for LGBTQIA+ rights. As the first country in Africa, and the fifth globally, to legalise same-sex marriages in 2006 through the Civil Union Act, our country has positioned itself as a beacon of equality and human rights in a region where such freedoms remain far out of reach for many.



While homosexual activity is legal in 133 countries around the world, there are several countries — mostly in Africa and the Middle East — where it is criminalised to a varying degree with penalties ranging from life imprisonment to the death penalty.

South Africa's Constitution, adopted in 1996, stands as a landmark achievement in its explicit

protection of LGBTQIA+ rights, prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. These legal victories, however, are only part of the equation. While we have made remarkable strides in advancing legal protection, societal acceptance remains elusive for many members of our own LGBTQIA+ community.

Despite the legal wins in South Africa, the harsh reality for many queer South Africans is a daily existence filled with violence, queerphobia, and social stigma. Homophobic attitudes are still prevalent, particularly in rural areas and townships, where LGBTQIA+ visibility often triggers violent and prejudiced reactions. For too many, living authentically means putting their lives at risk; an unacceptable reality in a nation that boasts one of the most progressive legal frameworks in the world.

Hate crimes and the danger to black queer and transgender women

A particularly alarming issue that persists in South Africa is the high frequency of hate crimes against black queer and transgender women. These individuals often face the dual burden of gender-based violence and anti-LGBTQIA+ violence, and the social, economic, and psychological toll of this discrimination is staggering. In many cases, perpetrators of violence against queer individuals are not held accountable, and the legal system's response often falls short of providing true justice or protection.



JHB pride attendees at the RESPECT Exhibition Stall

Moving from legal progress to social transformation

This reflection is particularly critical as we continue to grapple with the intersectionality of gender-based violence (GBV) and its disproportionate impact on LGBTQIA+ individuals. Despite progress on paper, the lack of visibility of LGBTQIA+ individuals in mainstream responses to GBV remains a pressing concern.

We must ask ourselves: Are we doing enough to address the unique challenges faced by queer individuals? The answer is an unequivocal no.

The resolve is not just about policy, but about culture and community. How can we work together to create a South Africa where everyone, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation, can live free from fear and harm? How can we create spaces where people can seek help without fear of further victimisation?

A call for collective action: The role of ubuntu and collaboration

The answer may lie in the spirit of Ubuntu, the African philosophy of community interdependence: "I am because we are." When one of us is harmed, we all suffer. The fight against gender-based violence within the LGBTQIA+ community must be seen not as a niche issue but as a national concern, one that requires unity, collaboration, and collective responsibility.

International partnerships, particularly collaboration with global organisations like the European Union (EU) and the United Nations, have been invaluable in advancing LGBTQIA+ rights. These collaborations provide financial aid, advocacy, capacity-building, and the promotion of human rights standards. Initiatives like the EU's support for LGBTQIA+ civil society organisations, including funding for legal aid and healthcare, are critical in advancing equality.

3. Violence and hate crimes: Physical violence, including assault and murder, against LGBTQIA+ individuals, is shockingly common, and the perpetrators are rarely brought to justice.
4. Limited access to quality healthcare: Stigma and discrimination often prevent LGBTQIA+ individuals from seeking the healthcare they need, particularly mental health services and care for HIV/AIDS.
5. Transgender rights: Transgender individuals face heightened violence and discrimination due to legal and societal barriers preventing them from accessing healthcare, legal recognition, and safe gender expression.
6. Intersectionality: LGBTQIA+ individuals are also marginalised by race, class, or other social categories. They face compounded discrimination, making it even more difficult for them to access resources or support.

Support from families and communities

Close to my heart is positive family support, a factor which cannot be overstated as it may improve the well-being of transgender and gender-diverse youth and assist in mitigating negative mental and physical health outcomes.

My own life is a testament to this: I proudly identify as lesbian because the love and support I received at home made expressing my queer identity feel comfortable. However, some families may not be that understanding when they first learn that a child is queer or transgender. It's in this context that organisations like Parents, Families, and Friends of South African Queers (PFSAQ) play a vital role in helping LGBTQIA+ individuals navigate the challenges they face.

We must also hold institutions accountable, particularly schools, communities, and healthcare providers, to ensure they offer safe spaces where LGBTQIA+ people can thrive.

A call to action

As we head towards 16 Days of Activism, we must renew our commitment to an inclusive response to gender-based violence. This includes comprehensive training for service providers, better data collection, and accessible resources that affirm every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The success of our efforts to combat gender-based violence and support the LGBTQIA+ community relies on all of us—the government, civil society, international partners, and individuals—coming together. We must not shy away from this fight. We must be vocal in our support for queer South Africans, for their rights, their dignity, and their safety.

The ideals enshrined in our Constitution may not yet be a lived reality for many LGBTQIA+ South Africans, but we must continue to advocate, speak out, and work together.

As we reflect on 35 years of Pride, let us celebrate how far we have come but also recognise the work ahead. Together, we can build a South Africa where every person, no matter their identity, can live free from fear, violence, and discrimination.

Now is the time for action. Now is the time for change.

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Campaign News

RESPECT at the DStv Delicious International Food & Music Festival

Over the September Heritage weekend, the RESPECT campaign left a lasting impression at the DStv Delicious International Food & Music Festival held at Johannesburg's Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit, reaching over 35,000 attendees.

Celebrating "Creative Freedom" alongside the Festival's 30th anniversary, the campaign engaged attendees with call-to-action messages, challenging norms that continue to perpetuate gender-based violence.

The Fund hosted a Safe Space wherein more than 400 attendees engaged in interactive sessions, relaxing and learning about GBVF prevention. The RESPECT campaign messaging displayed throughout the venue strengthened and encouraged a collective commitment to ending GBVF.



Festival attendees rallying support against GBV

Johannesburg Pride



GBVF Team joining the Pride Parade

In October 2024, the Fund joined the 35th Johannesburg Pride, marching in solidarity alongside over 15,000 LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies.

With an interactive exhibition, the Fund's vibrant RESPECT messaging reached more than 25,000 parade-goers, advocating against GBVF and reinforcing its commitment to human rights and inclusivity.

The event provided a vital platform to amplify messages of respect, equality, and safety for all.

Digital billboards to celebrate National Women's Month

To celebrate National Women's Month in August, the Fund flighted the RESPECT campaign on digital billboards across Gauteng. These billboards reinforced the message of RESPECT, acknowledging the significant impact that violence still has on women of all age groups and the need for a shift in this perpetuating behaviour. The billboards ensured the campaign's vital message gained significant visibility, amplifying our commitment to driving awareness and fostering a culture of RESPECT throughout the nation.



Women's Month Billboard on major roads in Gauteng



Mmabatho Tlale

Chief Human Capital Officer

1. What role does your organisation play in reducing gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF)?

Zeda Limited (Zeda), which holds the license to the iconic Avis brand in South Africa, plays a significant role in combating gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) through strategic partnerships, such as sponsoring two vehicles to support the Funds operational needs.

By providing mobility solutions, we enable the Fund's representatives to reach GBV hotspots across South Africa, where they educate communities and offer essential support. This initiative underscores our commitment to fostering equality, respect, and safety in the communities we serve, while also connecting humanity through shared efforts.

Zeda maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards GBVF. Additionally, we support our brand ambassadors by offering them safe housing and counselling to help them navigate instances of gender-based violence. Through these actions, we aim to foster a culture of equality and respect.

Zeda's Men's Forum also plays a vital role in promoting awareness, fostering respect, and supporting individuals affected by gender-based violence, thereby contributing significantly to the broader goal of achieving gender equality in society.



Avis's vehicle handover to the GBVF Executive team.

2. To drive social change, what decisive action can corporate South Africa take to prevent and monitor GBVF at work?

Corporate South Africa must take a proactive role in addressing GBVF by:
- Collaborating with initiatives like the GBVF Response Fund to amplify their impact.
- Promoting workplace campaigns that focus on education, respect, and prevention.
- Providing resources, such as mobility solutions, to organisations tackling GBVF on the ground.
- Establishing clear policies and mechanisms to support employees affected by GBVF.
- By embedding these actions into their operations, businesses can contribute to lasting social change.

3. Looking ahead, what are your aspirations for your partnership with the Fund, and how do you see your involvement evolving?

We see this partnership as a powerful opportunity for sustained collaboration. Although our current sponsorship is set for 12 months, we look forward to extending our support and enhancing our involvement with the Fund.

We aim to further the Fund's mission of education, prevention, and resource allocation, while actively participating in initiatives like the RESPECT campaign to foster lasting societal change.

4. What's the one thing that you would change now so we can live in a GBVF-free South Africa?

To create a truly GBVF-free South Africa, we must harness the transformative power of mobility and education. It is essential to ensure that every community, particularly those identified as GBV hotspots, has access to vital resources, comprehensive education, and proactive prevention programmes. This strategic approach serves as a catalyst for significant change in our fight against GBVF.

One of the most impactful changes we can make is to focus on educating young boys. By instilling values of respect, equality and healthy relationships from an early age, we can foster a generation that actively rejects violence and embraces compassion.

Furthermore, integrating GBVF awareness into school curricula, workplace training programmes and community outreach initiatives is crucial. This holistic approach will challenge and change the harmful attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence. By creating an environment where open discussions about GBVF are encouraged, we can dismantle the stigma surrounding these issues and promote a culture of accountability and respect.

5. From your perspective, what are some of the obstacles that we still have to overcome as a society as we work towards gender equity and equality?

Some significant challenges include:

- Deeply ingrained social norms and stereotypes that normalise violence.
- Limited access to resources in rural and underserved communities.
- Insufficient coordination among stakeholders to address GBVF comprehensively.
- The need for sustained funding and logistical support to amplify initiatives like the GBVF Response Fund.

By overcoming these obstacles, we can move closer to a society where everyone is valued and respected equally.



Avis's vehicle handover to the GBVF Executive team.

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Our Community-Based Organization



The Fund Supports Community-Based Organization for Women and Children Saartjie Baartman

Impact story: The Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children

Making a Difference in the Community

The Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children (SBCWC) has been a sanctuary of hope and resilience on the Cape Flats for over 25 years. Operating 365 days a year, the Centre provides cost-free, life-changing services to women and children who are survivors of GBV.

Through its 14 comprehensive programmes, the Centre has touched the lives of more than 276,000 survivors, addressing critical needs such as shelter, substance abuse recovery, child protection, legal assistance, economic empowerment, and community outreach. These efforts are grounded in the belief that no South African woman should face violence alone. By addressing the needs of survivors and fostering resilience, SBCWC is a beacon of safety and empowerment in a society still grappling with GBV.

Collaborating for Impact

In the past year, SBCWC has achieved remarkable milestones, assisting 3,789 direct beneficiaries and reaching nearly nine million individuals through focused awareness and media campaigns.

Prevention efforts focus on engaging men and boys to reshape harmful norms and promote healthy masculinity. Initiatives like the GBV Manenberg Hub train participants in conflict resolution and gender-sensitive practices while fostering community-driven solutions. SBCWC also works collaboratively through its monthly GBV Hub meetings with SAPS, local CBOs, and the Department of Social Development to address trauma and challenge patriarchal norms.



Children's programme at the Saartjie Baartman Centre

A significant highlight of 2024 was the Centre's accreditation by the National Department of Social Development as a Khuseleka One-Stop Centre, further strengthening its capacity to offer integrated services and uphold the rights of survivors.

Aligning with National Strategies

The Centre's work aligns seamlessly with the National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide (NSP) 2023-2028, addressing pillars 2 (Prevention), 4 (Support), and 5 (Economic Empowerment). SBCWC's prevention strategies aim to educate communities about GBV and foster partnerships with local stakeholders.

Support services include a Khuseleka One-Stop Centre offering trauma counselling, healthcare, legal aid, and shelter. Economic empowerment is another cornerstone, equipping survivors with accredited job skills, entrepreneurial training, and IT proficiency, ensuring they leave the shelter with enhanced financial independence and skills.

Adapting to Challenges

Amid limited resources and a challenging economic climate, SBCWC has expanded its income-generating initiatives to sustain vital services. Support from the GBVF Response Fund has been instrumental in enabling the Centre to continue its critical work. This partnership underscores a shared commitment to eradicating GBV, reflecting a collective responsibility to restore dignity and security to survivors.



Workshop at the Saartjie Baartman Centre

Through unwavering dedication and innovative approaches, the Saartjie Baartman Centre continues to empower the most vulnerable, paving the way for a safer and more equitable society.

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Thought leadership



Justice Delayed Is Justice Denied

By Sazini Mojapelo, CEO of the GBVF Response Fund

In May this year, 16 million South Africans voted in the country's seventh general elections, bringing a new Government of National Unity (GNU) to power. It was pleasing to see the elections declared free and fair, reflecting the public's desire for change.

Shortly before the elections, President Cyril Ramaphosa signed the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Bill into law, which was first introduced in 2022. I received the news of the President signing the GBV Bill into law with cautious optimism. Our aspiration for a free and equal society remains undermined as long as the women in our country do not feel safe and empowered.

And they don't, for various well-documented reasons.

The gravity of the issue

Shortly after the elections, we were once again confronted with a sobering reminder of our ongoing struggle against gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) when the Public Protector released a damning Report on the handling of GBVF.

The GBVF Response Fund (the Fund) welcomed the investigation, which revealed serious administrative shortcomings in the systems supporting GBVF victims, including delays in investigation and prosecution, convoluted application processes, and inadequate coordination among key government entities, including the Departments of Justice and Constitutional Development, Social Development, and the South African Police Service (SAPS).

These gaps, exacerbated by insufficient resources, poor data management, and lack of training, only deepen the trauma for survivors. The Public Protector's findings underscore systemic failures that prevent survivors from receiving the protection and justice they deserve.

The findings in the Report are not isolated incidents but reflect deeper structural issues requiring comprehensive reforms across the justice system, including law enforcement, the judiciary, and victim support services. These failures erode public trust, contributing to a cycle of impunity. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated, urgent response at all levels.

Pathways to reform

As an organisation committed to fighting GBVF, the Fund is deeply troubled by the gaps identified in the Report. Our response must focus on accountability—not just for perpetrators, but for the institutions charged with delivering justice. Key to this is ensuring transparency, timely interventions, and robust oversight mechanisms within the justice system.

We must also consider the broader victim support framework. Law enforcement and judicial officials need sensitisation training to reduce secondary victimisation and better support survivors. Survivors must be fully informed about legal proceedings, including bail conditions and case progress, to prevent re-victimisation. The Victim Charter should be amended to ensure victims are provided with clear information about bail conditions, as seen in recent cases of released offenders re-offending.

The Fund supports the recommendations in the Report and is committed to working with both government and civil society to implement reforms. By addressing these administrative deficiencies, we can move closer to a justice system that effectively safeguards survivors and their communities.

The problematic definition of intent

Each case of GBVF represents a profound injustice. However, victims of sexual violence often face significant hurdles in the court system. A recent ruling from the Gauteng Division of the High Court in Pretoria, won by the Embrace Project, challenges the problematic definition of consent in sexual violence cases. The Court ruled that certain provisions of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act were unconstitutional. These provisions allowed for the possibility that a perpetrator could claim a mistaken belief in consent, even if that belief was unreasonable.

Pending confirmation from the Constitutional Court, this ruling will require accused individuals to take "objectively reasonable steps" to confirm that the complainant consented to the sexual act. This shift in the law will make it easier to establish intent, removing a significant barrier to securing convictions and allowing the National Prosecuting Authority to pursue more of these cases in court.

A call to action

As a private sector-led Fund, we are committed to supporting all stakeholders in the fight against GBVF. The Fund's work has never been more critical, and we urge policymakers to adopt the reforms outlined in the Public Protector's Report. We also call on our partners in the private sector to continue supporting initiatives such as the National Prosecuting Authority's Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs), which have seen a rise in the number of cases reported and processed.

As a society, we are judged not only by our aspirations but by our actions. The findings of the Public Protector's Report should act as a wake-up call. It is crucial for all sectors—government, civil society, the private sector, and citizens—to unite and drive meaningful reform.

The pursuit of justice for victims of GBVF requires unwavering commitment to accountability, compassion, and equity. Each of us has a role to play, whether by advocating for change, supporting victims, or holding leaders accountable. Let this be the moment where we reaffirm our collective commitment to a future where justice is not just a promise but a reality for all.

While the revelations in the Report are sobering, they also present a unique opportunity for transformative change. We must seize this moment to build a justice system that acts swiftly, treats everyone fairly, and safeguards the rights and dignity of all individuals.

The time for action is now.

This is a shortened version of this article. The full version was published by Daily Maverick.

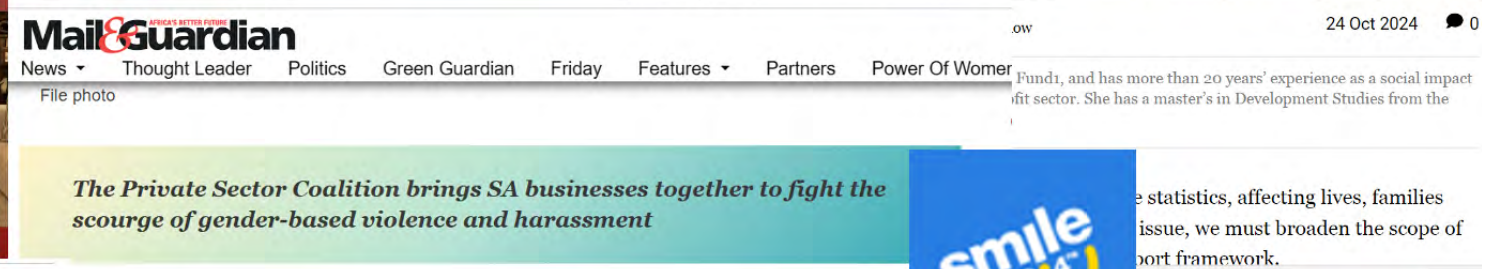
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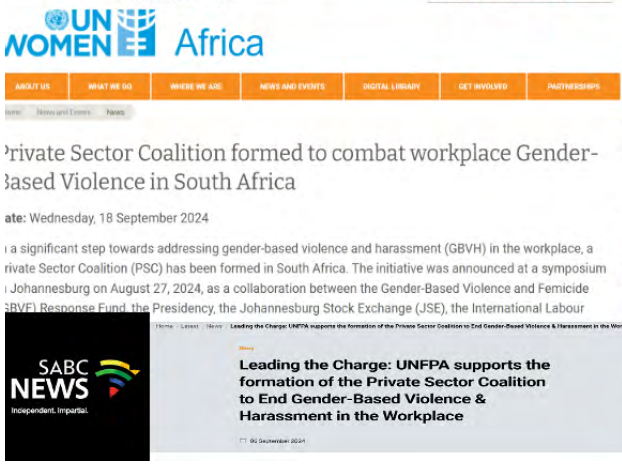
In the News


Randburg Sun
September 18 ·
new coalition of South African businesses has been formed to fight gender-based violen
arassment, focusing on prevention, protection, and enforcement in the workplace.


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DAILY MAVERICK
NEWZROOM AFRIKA
OPINIONISTA
Transforming justice — the urgent need for reforms in South Africa's gender-based violence response


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Private Sector Coalition Against GBV


Mail&Guardian
News
Thought Leader
Politics
Green Guardian
Friday
Features
Partners
Power Of Women
File photo
24 Oct 2024
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The Private Sector Coalition brings SA businesses together to fight the scourge of gender-based violence and harassment


UN WOMEN Africa
Private Sector Coalition formed to combat workplace Gender-Based Violence in South Africa
ate: Wednesday, 18 September 2024
SABC NEWS
Leading the Charge: UNFPA supports the formation of the Private Sector Coalition to End Gender-Based Violence & Harassment in the Workplace


INTRODUCING
THE PRIVATE SECTOR COALITION AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT
PRIVATE SECTOR COALITION AGAINST GBVH
CALL TO ACTION
GBVF

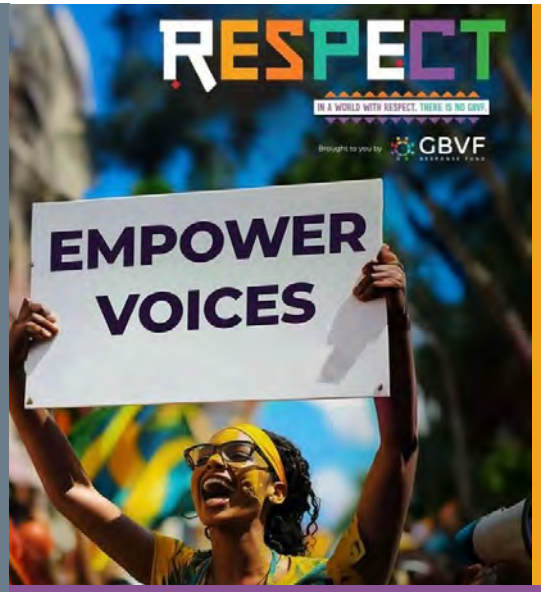
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The Citizen
Coalition formed to address gender-based violence in the workplace
20th September 2024
Font size:
Professional advocacy group Gender-based Violence and Femicide Response Fund (GBVF Fund), together with the Presidency, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), announced the formation of the Private Sector Coalition Against Gender-based Violence and Harassment in the Workplace (the PSC), in a landmark move to combat gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in the workplace.

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Hotline Numbers & Links

National GBV Helpline	**0800 150 150**
National Counselling Line	**0861 322 322**
POWA	**011 642 4345**
Rape Crisis	**021 447 9762**
TEARS Foundation (FREE SMS Line)	***134*7355#**
Childline	**08000 55555**
SADAG	**080 021 2223**
Toll Free Crisis Line	**086 157 4747**
Rape Crisis	**021 447 9762**
Emergency	**107**
Skype address for members of the community	**HelpmeGBV**
GBV and Femicide Complaints by SAPS	**0800 333 177**
Child abuse call back request line	**SMS 'help' to 31022**
Vodacom Bright Sky App	**Download on Playstore**
Whistle-blower hotline	0800 203 598



Your Empowered Voice Can Save Lives

Take Action. Report GBVF to enable a world with RESPECT.

Our website GBVF Respond Fund – Together we can take action against GBVF. (gbvfresponsefund1.org)

Find us on:

https://www.linkedin.com/company/gbvf-response-fund-1/

X (Twitter) @GBVF_Fund

GBVF Response Fund1 | Facebook

Instagram: @gbvfresponsefund1

GBVF RESPONSE FUND