

STOP

**GENDER BASED
VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN AND
CHILDREN**

#whereAmIcounted

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#beVisible

#BonaKala



**HOSPERSA CALLS FOR SPECIALISED SERVICES
FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**



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THE HEALTH MINISTRY MUST PROVIDE SPECIALISED SERVICES FOR GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES

This should include additional staff within specialized units who can ensure that every victim of Gender Based Violence receives appropriate services.

In a country with such alarming levels of violence ranging from rape, grievous bodily harm to murder, it is crucial for the health service to provide a compassionate and specialised service to victims of violence.

Victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV) need to be received by well-trained health workers who understand their biological and psycho-social needs and are able to provide relevant comfort, advice, appropriate medical treatment and referral for ongoing support, and protection services.

- The health system provides an opportunity for early detection; counseling and prevention of GBV. Health workers also play a pivotal role in mitigating the severe effects of gender-based violence as they usually provide the first point of service for victims in their worst state of trauma. The health service in its current state is not well placed to address the scourge of GBV. Whilst victims of sexual violence have some access to one-stop services through the 55 Thuthuzela centers countrywide, GBV victims are often not advised or referred by health facilities due to the lack of information and knowledge on services available. Currently the Department of Health only collects data on sexual assault and does not report or record incidences of GBV. Therefore many victims seeking medical care for GBV are undetected in the health system and opportunities for preventive counselling and onward referral are missed as a result.

Our concerns

- Incidence of GBV are not recorded within the health sector (No data elements, indicators on the National Indicator Data set).
- Inadequate training of health care workers on GBV and sexual assault. The one day training program currently offered by the Department of Health is inadequate, as we believe that this is a highly specialised service area.
- Existing staff shortages within the public health sector hinders the implementation of guidelines from the National Sexual Assault Policy (2005).
- Growing medico legal cases against health care workers.

The guidelines in the National Sexual Assault Policy (2005) are not well understood and many nurses have never received training on them. Although these guidelines are clear and will reduce sexual assault if fully implemented, they are also outdated. The lack of resources in terms of equipment and staffing, also hinders implementation.



Hospersa and the community of Jouberton, North West Province, marching against women and child abuse.

HOSPERSA URGENTLY CALLS FOR THE FOLLOWING

1. **The development of a National Gender Based Violence Plan.**
 - ✓ The plan must be similar to the National Strategic Plan for HIV/TB/STIs (NSP) 2017/2022
 - ✓ This plan should be multisectoral with adequate human and financial resources;
2. Ensure that all health facilities have a dedicated and specialised service available for victims of gender based violence and sexual assault;
3. Additional specialised staff to be trained and employed within the health sector as GBV specialists;
4. Training and implementation of the National Sexual Assault Policy (2005) which was issued by the Department of Health;
5. A GBV screening tool for health care workers to be implement as this will assist in the proactive prevention of serious GBV incidence;
6. Debriefing for health care workers who are working with victims of GBV and sexual assault; and
7. A national campaign specifically speaking to the health system's role in a GBV service.



Health care workers have the responsibility to provide health care that is in line with the World Health Organisation's definition of health: *"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"*.

Health care workers have the right to be protected and special mention must be made on the gendered nature of the health sector as well as the fact that Health care workers experience GBV at work, from clients and the system. This must be addressed through a comprehensive OHS service, inclusive of debriefing.

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