



DIRECTORATE: HUMAN RESOURCES

Private Bag X454, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Moses Mabhidha Building, 330 Langalibalele Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3200
Tel: 033 897 4398
Name: Herbert Ngcobo
Email: Herbert.Ngcobo@kzntreasury.gov.za
Website: www.kzntreasury.gov.za

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IRT 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

In quarter 2, we produced an article on fixed-term contract employment, and we indicated that we'll continue with the second part thereof and analyse section 37 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. However, this quarter we pay attention to the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence (GBV). The 16 Days of activism against GBV is an international phenomenon running from 25 November 2024 to 10 December 2024, focused on eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Such focus is not intended to create an impression that the scourge of GBV only affects women and girls, some men are also equally affected; however, women and girls are the most affected segment of society. Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world, affecting one in three women (UN WOMEN).

According to the World Health Organization, violence against women happens in every country and culture causing harm to millions of women and girls. Women and girls, especially those living in humanitarian emergencies experience risks and challenges to access care from care facilities. This is more possible with people living in remote areas, it's even worse if such areas are situated where there is no development, particularly roads and public/clinic facilities.

Women and girls are highly susceptible to GBV stemming mostly from gender inequality, and norms and beliefs that violence against women and girls is acceptable. Often, this segment of society (women and girls) would not even contemplate recourse to legal action as a measure to free themselves from being subjected to GBV. A major challenge regarding GBV is that normally, GBV-related acts of violence are not always explicit, hence it is normally very difficult for women and girls experiencing such violence to recognise it as GBV. As such, it becomes difficult and/or challenging to deal with and to address it.

Intimate partner violence is the most prevalent type of GBV manifesting itself in many forms. For example, not involving your female partner in decision making processes, not giving her financial freedom, always snapping and/or shouting at her, just to mention a few incidents, destroying her self-confidence, making her doubt her self-worth, destroying her emotionally. These are all GBV acts of the worst kind. The most disgraceful one, is laying a hand on someone you claim to love, and they believe that by so doing you are demonstrating deep love for them because of the jealousy you have for them. Make no mistake, it is not jealousy; but simply GBV against which you must seek legal recourse.

For instance, as recently as two weeks ago; a 30-year-old female originally from Matatiela was brutally murdered by her long-time boyfriend, as a result; a grieving Pietermaritzburg family is unable to bury her (their daughter) according to the Witness of December 10, 2024. Worst of all, this ordeal happened during the 16 days of activism focused on the elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). We are not implying that it would have been better if it happened outside of this period, but our emphasis is that this disgraceful habit/conduct/behaviour must be eliminated altogether. Every day of the year should be regarded as 16 Days of Activism for no violence against women and girls. In fact, nobody must commit GBV against anyone regardless of gender or sexual orientation.



Therefore, it remains our joint responsibility to ensure that no gender inequality prevails in our midst, and that those norms and beliefs must be condemned in the strongest possible terms, and accordingly discarded. There is nobody who deserves to be subjected to GBV in any way whatsoever. Everybody is equally important, as such, none are deserving of being subjected to GBV whether in the workplace or anywhere else.

The preceding paragraph at the end intimates that there is workplace GBV. Workplace GBV occurs in the form of bullying, physical and verbal abuse from colleagues, supervisors, or managers; sexual harassment and unwanted sexual advances; sexual abuse and violence, including 'coercive' or transactional sex, rape and sexual assault; stalking; physical assault; abuse or harassment around pregnancy; psychological abuse, intimidation, and threats; acts of physical and sexual violence; abusive working conditions such as poor health and safety (including building and equipment safety); inadequate or inappropriate sanitary facilities; involuntary excessively long working hours and unpredictable or late demands to work overtime; sexist abuse, and stalking; physical abuse including assault, battering, attempted murder; economic and financial abuse; and online or digital violence. The employer has a responsibility to, amongst others, put measures in place to prevent and/or eliminate workplace GBV and all other forms of harassment in the workplace, as well as taking appropriate actions against anyone committing it (GBV) in the workplace.

GBV can cause long-term physical, psychological harm or mental effects/problems on victims. Violence and abuse affect women involved as well as their children, families, and communities. Such includes harm to an individual's health, possibly long-term harm to children, and communities such as lost work and homelessness (OASG, Office on Women's Health). GBV involving physical violence could result in physical injury, from simple wound/s to loss of body parts and even death (OpenLearn Create).

In conclusion, GBV is a worldwide problem that requires concerted effort to collectively address it in the settings where we find ourselves. For instance, we can talk about it even in small groups as the main purpose should always be to fight the scourge of GBV with the view to eliminating it altogether and thus contribute to a society free from GBV. Remember, the origins of a woman, can be traced back to a man. She is thus, indeed the bone of your bones, the flesh of your flesh; therefore, always take good care of her.

***(Q3 employee relations article
An opinion from the Labour Desk
MH Ngcobo)***