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ASSESSING THE WORK OF SAPS POLICE STATIONS IN COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Overview of Key Findings

(CGE RESEARCH REPORT, 2016)



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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

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CGE MANDATE

- The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) is an independent statutory body established in terms of Section 181 of the Constitution of South Africa.
- The mandate of the CGE is provided for in Section 187 of the Constitution and in the CGE Act of 1996 (as amended)
- CGE is mandated to promote respect for, protect, develop and attain gender equality, and to make recommendations on any legislation affecting the status of women
- Section 11 (h) of the CGE Act mandates the Commission to monitor and evaluate the implementation of international and regional conventions acceded to by South Africa, that impact on gender equality.
- In fulfilling its core mandate the CGE continues to monitor interventions that are geared towards the elimination of gender based violence in the country.



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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

- ❑ South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world, with reported figures ranging from 40%-55% although much of the violence remains unreported by many victims who largely choose to remain silent. The high rates of GBV in South Africa appear to compare with similar reported rates (up to 45.6%) of women in Africa also experiencing GBV.
- ❑ The root causes of the high levels of violence in South Africa are varied, often linked to legacies of injustices of the past, poverty, unemployment and inequality
- ❑ The CGE initiated a series of studies focusing on gender based violence during the following financial years:
 - ❑ **2011/2012:** Assessing progress on the implementation of the National Action Plan (Kopanong Declaration) of the 365 Day Programme & Evaluating implementation of the Victim's Charter
 - ❑ **2013/2014:** Assessing the work of the National Council on Gender based Violence (NCGBV)
 - ❑ **2015/2016:** Assessing programmes by selected National and Provincial government departments to combat Gender Based Violence (GBV/VAW)



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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

- ❑ **2016/2017:** Finally, assessing the work of the South African Police Services (SAPS), focusing on the police station programmes/initiatives to combat violence against women (VAW) in their areas of jurisdiction.
- ❑ The South African Police Service (SAPS) is a critical stakeholder in the fight to prevent crime in general and combat crime gender based violence in particular.
- ❑ SAPS was tasked as a key institution, in terms of the “365 days” programme NAP to address a number of key objectives such as:
 - ❑ strengthening the capacities of existing prevention programmes;
 - ❑ focusing on the development and implementation of prevention and intervention programmes and putting in place mechanisms against GBV and VAWC.



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BACKGROUND CONT..

- Again, the NAP assigned SAPS to ensure that domestic violence is not confined to the private family sphere, but addressed as a crime and a public health issue.
- SAPS five year Strategic Plan (2014-2019) has amongst its objectives to reduce the level of crimes against women, children and other vulnerable groups by 2% per annum.
- SAPS has (among others) the following legal/administrative tools to execute its mandate of implementing national laws against crime and violence (including GBV & VAWC):
 - The South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act 68 of 1995)
 - SAPS Five Year Strategic Plan (2014-2019)
 - The National Orders & Instructions (2/2012- Victim Empowerment; 7/1999- DV; 3/2008- SO, etc....)
 - Provincial Orders & Instructions
 - Station Orders & Station Priority



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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- Assess the work of state institutions in their continued efforts, plans, programmes and strategies to combat gender based violence.
- Examine the relevant national and local interventions to combat crime, particularly violence directed against women and children.
- Scrutinize the work of selected SAPS Police Stations in line with the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 (one of the primary legislative instruments for the SAPS to deal with violence against women) - it empowers the Station Commanders to put in place programmes and interventions at the station level to deal with GBV and VAWC.



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METHODOLOGY & APPROACH

- The approach was primarily qualitative and utilised in-depth interviews with the Station Commanders, Deputy Station Commanders or other relevant officials in at selected SAPS Police Stations.
- A total number of twelve police stations were initially identified and approached in four provinces. However only six police station agreed to participate:
 - Limpopo:** Seshego Police Station and Lebowakgomo Police Station
 - Eastern Cape:** Berlin Police Station and East London Police Station
 - North West:** Rustenburg Police Station and Boitekong Police Station
- The above police stations were selected specifically from areas that service large communities from both urban and rural communities, especially areas reporting high rates of GBV.
- Interviews conducted and available official documents relating to the work/programmes and strategies of the SAPS were collected and examined



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Key Thematic Areas from the Findings:

Strategic Leadership issues

- Knowledge of key issues/causes of domestic violence/GBV/VAW
- Knowledge of key national /provincial/station-level frameworks on DV/GBV/VAW
- Ability to develop long term strategies and prioritise DV/GBV/VAW in the local area of jurisdiction
- Mobilise the necessary resources to address challenges of DV/GBV/VAW

Institutional Capacity & GBV-related internal structures

- Station capacity to deal effectively with DV/GBV/VAW by mobilising necessary resources (i.e. knowledge, skilled personnel, availability of accurate information on DV/GBV/VAW, availability of funds, etc.)
- Putting in place relevant internal structures to deal with DV/GBV/VAW
- Developing relations with relevant CBOs/CSOs to boost capacity



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

Key Thematic Areas from the Findings:

Relevant intervention programmes and initiatives

➤ Current (intervention, prevention & Response) programmes, projects or initiatives in place to deal with DV/GBV/VAW in local areas of jurisdiction



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

CASE STUDY 1: RUSTENBURG POLICE STATION, RUSTENBURG (NORTH WEST)

- Well resourced Station in an town/urban area (predominantly mining area)
- Female Station Commander, knowledgeable of the socio/economic and law enforcement challenges facing the local station but limited knowledge of some key national policy frameworks on DV/GBV/VAW

Institutional Capacity and GBV-related internal structures

- The station had a Victim Support Centre to handle case reporting and collection statistics on DV, although it was in a poor state and under-resourced
 - unclear working the relations between the police station and the Victim Support Centre
 - Unclear relations with the Domestic Violence/Crime Prevention Officer (CPO) and VSC Volunteer officer
- The station reported close working relations with key stakeholders in combating GBV (e.g.. DSD, NGOs) to assist, support and care for victims.



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

- Counsellors were available to provide assistance to victims
- Some training was provided on some of the legislative frameworks on domestic violence (i.e. DVA, SOA)

Relevant intervention programmes and initiatives

- There were no clear/specific programmes initiatives dealing with DV/GBV/VAW in the local area
 - Fairly limited knowledge of relevant/specific provisions of the DVA
 - Police station did not provide satisfactory responses on measures, initiatives and programmes on the ground to ensure effective interventions against DV/GBV/VAW in the community
- The station only conducted awareness campaigns to raise awareness on issues of DV/GBV/VAW (using local radio stations); its effectiveness could not be determined
- Many victims of domestic violence were inclined to withdraw cases due to family pressures



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

CASE STUDY 2: BOITEKONG POLICE STATION, RUSTENBURG (NORTH WEST)

- Station located in a mix of urban/rural areas with informal settlements (predominantly mining area)
- Male station Commander, aware of the key socio/economic challenges facing law enforcement in the local area; causes of VAW; limited resources for the station

Institutional Capacity and GBV-related internal structures

- Station has a Domestic Violence Coordinator to handle reports on cases of violence; challenges include lack of resources (i.e. office space, vehicle to make visits to victims).
- Inadequate training/skills development to personnel on recordkeeping, capturing data sex-disaggregated data on reported cases on DV/GBV/VAW
- Designated counsellors available within the police station to provide assistance to victims of crime (not clear how many counsellors were available and how often)
- Working relations with some local NGOs (Lifeline & Trauma Centre) to boost capacity to deal with DV/GBV/VAW



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

Relevant intervention programmes and initiatives

- The leadership of the Police Station understood the social and economic challenges facing the station, but no clear/coherent long terms intervention strategies, plans or initiatives to deal with violence against women.
- The police station only had community awareness campaigns through the local radio stations, community meetings and road shows to deal with DV/GBV/VAW (the effectiveness of these campaigns could not be assured)
- The Station also had signed an MOU with the Bafokeng tribal administration that resulted in park homes, and officers available to assist the victims of domestic violence.



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

CASE STUDY 3: LEBOWAKGOMO POLICE STATION (LIMPOPO PROVINCE)

- Station service rural areas, with limited resources and poor infrastructure
- Male station Commander, limited knowledge of key national frameworks on DV/GBV/VAW

Institutional Capacity and GBV- related internal structures

- The station has FCS unit, with the specialized detectives to deal with sexual offences cases; qualified social workers assigned by DSD; other service providers (i.e.. Psychologists) to assist in addressing DV/GBV/VAW.
- Station reported training provided to officers, particularly compliance with the DVA although incidents were reported of some officers resisting such training
- Although in a predominantly rural area, the station did appear to have basic resources, including office facilities, vehicles and other infrastructure to enable the work of law-enforcement to take place unhindered



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

Relevant intervention programme and initiatives

- Crime awareness campaigns were conducted at schools, through radio stations to reach local community members with key messages on DV/GBV/VAW.
- The station revealed that it worked closely with the traditional leaders in the area and also through provincial initiatives of engaging men to fight GBV
- However these initiatives appeared ineffective in curbing DV/GBV/VAW – the Station reported an escalation in cases of violence against women and children per annum
- Also victims of violence continue to withdraw cases of domestic violence against perpetrators; the level of reporting decreasing despite awareness raising campaigns.



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

CASE STUDY 4: SESHEGO POLICE STATION

- Station located in an urban area, fairly well resourced with relatively good facilities and infrastructure
- Led by a male Station Commander, well informed and knowledgeable of the social challenges and underlying causes of DV/GBV/VAW in the local area

Institutional capacity and GBV-related internal structures

- The station has a VSC, which keeps an undated register on reported cases of domestic violence
- Officer training provided in line with provisions of DVA and Station Orders.
- The station reported a gender mainstreaming programme (although details were not clear).
- Female SAPS members participate in national and provincial Women's Network dealing with gender issues



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

Relevant intervention programmes and initiatives

- The Seshego police station did not have clear and well defined local strategies or long term programmes to deal with the scourge of GBV, except through crime awareness campaigns and routine policing operations.
- The station convened internal workshops on gender based violence for staff members.
- The station was engaged in collaborative initiatives involving the social crime prevention cluster, community members and women's networks to address the challenge of violence against women.
- Also the station had reported to have embarked on a proactive programme of engagement with the community to encourage elderly people to report cases of violence and abuse to the station



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

CASE STUDY 5: BERLIN POLICE STATION, (EAST LONDON)

- Station serves predominantly rural area; Led by a male Station Commander, who was adamant that the while DV/VAW was a challenge, it was not a major scourge in the area
- Identified substance abuse/alcoholism as underlying causes of DV/VAW in the area

Institutional capacity and GBV-related internal structures

- The station has a Victim Empowerment Centre (VEC), though not fully equipped and limited resources
- The VEC keeps a register of cases of domestic violence (with women predominantly reporting cases of domestic violence).
- Station commander emphasised the need for compliance with the DVA, and willingness to take disciplinary action against officers contravening the DVA opening cases with the Independent Police Investigating Directorate (IPID) for investigations.



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

The Station Commander found to be hands-on in the management of the reporting of cases of domestic violence

Relevant intervention programmes and initiatives

The Police Station also conducts awareness campaigns/community outreach activities to raise awareness on domestic violence issues

Collaborates closely with the traditional leaders as it is based in predominantly rural area.

Collaborates with women's and men's forums and NGOs to assist in identifying crime in the community (although such initiatives are not budgeted for).

The stations has put in place initiatives targeting vulnerable households (i.e. child-headed & female-headed) to provide visible protection.

The station reportedly relies on donations from local businesses to fund initiatives to address domestic violence.



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

CASE STUDY 6: EAST LONDON POLICE STATION, EAST LONDON (EASTERN CAPE)

- Police station based in an urban area/city and relatively well resourced
- Male Station Commander, with training in gender mainstreaming
- Well informed/aware of the key challenges – stated intimate partner violence is a major challenge

Institutional capacity and GBV-related internal structures

- The station has a well equipped VSC and FCS unit in place to assist the victims of crime
- Collaborates with NGOs (i.e. the South African National Council on Alcoholism (SANCA), South African National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO), and Masimanyane women's support centre that has an office in the station.
- Services provided include confidential support and care, referrals, maintenance issues, divorce cases, harassment at home or workplace and post-trauma counselling
- Training offered on handling victims of crime and sexual offences . . .



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS (cont...)

Relevant intervention programmes and initiatives

- The Station also conducts awareness raising campaign on issues of violence (although these focus on other broader crime related issues, not just on violence against women).
- Campaign are conducted in the form of community meetings
- The Station Commander was convinced that awareness campaigns have been effective in encouraging community members to report cases of domestic violence and seek relevant information (however no evidence was provided to substantiate)
- The East London Police station also collaborates closely with the Makiwane Thuthuzela Care Centre (TCC) in providing care and support to victims of domestic violence.



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EMERGING ISSUES FROM THE STUDY

1. Station-level Strategic Leadership Issues

- Six Police Stations – 5 males and 1 female – Leadership at station level displayed some knowledge and understating of the key challenges in relation to domestic violence against women in their areas.
- Alcohol and substance abuse - key causal factors leading to various crimes such as (sexual assaults, rape, attempted rape, intimidation and other) - but figures not readily available
- Station leadership able to provide ideas, explanations of underlying causes of DV/VAW but not translate this knowledge into clear strategic plans and programmes on the ground
- Most common response strategy across the six stations was awareness raising campaigns (but the effectiveness of these campaigns could not be established by most Station Commanders). East London was the only police station that claimed awareness raising were yielding positive results.

2. Institutional capacity & GBV-related Internal Structures

- The most common institutional set-up in most police stations was the VSC (in some cases referred to as Victim Empowerment Centres)
- These VCS's appeared understaffed, (i.e. Rustenburg police station VSC had one volunteer); often lacked basic resources and no guarantee of effectiveness in their operations



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EMERGING ISSUES FROM THE STUDY Cont...

- The police stations had FCS units (however most appeared over-stretched and working on a variety of problems i.e. children, domestic crimes and other general crimes)
- Many of the Station Commanders were largely unfamiliar with some of the key national policy and legislative frameworks (other than the DVA) dealing with GBV/VAW.
- VSCs and FCS were largely post-incident support structures, while Police Stations had limited proactive capacity to deal with DV/GBV/VAW
- Limited resources for some Stations & greater reliance on ordinary SAPS officers to deal with DV/GBV/VAW often with limited training/knowledge in these areas

3. Relevant intervention programmes and initiatives

- Police Stations did not have clear, coherent and well-defined long term strategies/plans/programmes of action to tackle the scourge of domestic violence.
- Many of the stations admitted that the DV was persisting if not escalating at the time of the study
- Leadership of Police Stations were largely not familiar with multi-sectoral or interdepartmental programmes to inform their work on GBV; limited capacity to develop appropriate long term and effective strategic responses to GBV.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ It is necessary for the South African Police Services to develop an internal national programme of action to educate and sensitise its senior officers, especially Station Commanders, Deputy Station Commanders and other related personnel, on key national policy and legislative frameworks dealing with gender based violence and violence against women. Such an internal programme should also focus attention on clearly defining the role of the SAPS in general and that of police stations on the ground, in implementing national programmes of action to combat gender based violence and violence against women.

- ❑ The SAPS should strive to develop and/or enhance current multi-sectoral arrangements with other key department (e.g. DSD and Women's Ministry) and institutions such as the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to enhance inter-departmental or inter-agency collaborative working relations to address the scourge of gender based violence and violence against women.



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RECOMMENDATIONS Cont...

- ❑ The SAPS should draw up internal guidelines on the establishment of appropriate and well-resourced internal units to enhance the capacity of individual police stations for effective pro-active interventions (through prevention and response programmes) to deal with gender based violence or violence against women. This could include reviewing and enhancing the effectiveness of Victims Support Centres to equip them with the necessary capacity for effective pro-active interventions and responses.

- ❑ SAPS police stations should provide appropriate training to senior as well as ordinary police officers to equip them with the necessary skills to plan for and implement effective medium to long term programmes of action to combat violence against women in their policing precincts.



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THE END

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