|  |
| --- |
| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1974**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 27/08/2021**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 19 OF 2021**

**Mr S L Ngcobo (IFP) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

(1) With regard to the recent murder of a female law student at the University of Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape, what appropriate steps has his department taken to create more awareness regarding gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide and the unacceptable level of occurrence in the institutions of higher education;

(2) what progress has been made by tertiary institutions to adhere to the requirements and recommendations of The Policy and Strategy Framework Addressing Gender-based Violence in the Post-School Education Sector to date;

(3) whether the tertiary institutions have implemented the required changes to accommodate the specified policy framework on GBV; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what (a) are the relevant details and (b) is the current update? **NW2207E**

**REPLY:**

(1) All universities have measures in place to raise awareness and offer guidance and advice on GBV related matters. These include but are not limited to workshops or presentations during orientation weeks and during various parts of the year for students; roadshows; training; production and dissemination of brochures and other literature for the university community; and information on institutional websites. In addition to these initiatives, a large number of students have completed a curriculum on GBV prevention and mitigation via Higher Health, empowering them with knowledge and understanding of GBV and related matters. Higher Health is the Department’s implementing agency for student health, wellness and development in the post-school system.

There is a need for more comprehensive training embedded in institutional policies. The Ministerial Task Team established to advise the Minister and Department on gender- based violence and related matters, is exploring the possibility of national standards and principles about what should be included as a minimum in training sessions.

Higher Health has established relationships with campus and community radio stations to engage young students routinely on matters related to sexual and gender-based violence, and mental health as a matter of priority. There is also Higher Health's 24-hour toll-free helpline available in all 11 official languages. The line offers health, wellness and psychosocial risk assessment toolkits for early screening, empowerment and referral related to gender-based violence, mental health, HIV, TB and other matters.

(2) Following the release of the policy framework and as part of its work, the Ministerial Task Team held a series of engagements with university communities across various institutions. Amongst others, the aim was to establish how universities respond to sexual harassment and gender-based violence and harm, and what support is needed from the Department to enable the effective implementation of the policy framework.

(3) It has been established that not all universities have sufficient means to deal with GBV, and the Department and Higher Health aims to support campuses in addressing the problem. There has to be a coordinated implementation of the framework by universities through a fully coordinated national response. The Ministerial Task Team will advise on areas requiring improvement in institutional responses to gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and appropriate levels of support needed for the implementation of the national policy framework to address gender-based violence by universities.

Higher Health, through the Department, has released a set of instruments that will further strengthen the realisation of the policy framework. These instruments are directives to all institutions and management to put the necessary infrastructure towards a comprehensive response on cases of sexual and gender misconduct, rape and sexual assaults across all our campuses. The procedural guidelines and protocols on rape, code of ethics ensure that reporting of cases, disciplinary systems, safeguarding evidence, provision of rape kits, psychosocial support services and survivor-friendly infrastructure are developed across campuses.

The Department will play an oversight role, monitoring institutions to ensure that they take full responsibility for addressing GBV on their campuses.