



higher education
& training

Ministry:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DHET appoints team to address SGBV in HE institutions

6 October 2016 - In a week that has witnessed student movement to advance equity in tertiary education, the sector is cautioning that investment and resources being directed at higher education will be eroded – unless #rapemustfall and HIV, health and wellness factors are also addressed.

Hence, a range of stakeholders are championing new plans to address rape and gender-based violence at universities and colleges.

This forms part of strengthening and deepening HIV/AIDS prevention and support and other initiatives to deal with risks to student health and ability to complete studies – including alcohol and drugs abuse which exacerbate violence and sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

The universities and colleges are looking at ways to collaborate in order to share existing methods that work in responding to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and to adopt and roll-out new policies and measures in order to improve safety of their students and staff.

Many – but not all – of the 76 higher education institutions, which work with two million students and staff across some 420 campuses, have policies and programmes to reduce and deal with SGBV. Reports of incidents and institutional, legal and health-related responses indicate inconsistent application of policies and availability of services. Inadequate protection and assistance for rape survivors and ineffective prosecution of perpetrators are frequently a concern, and contribute to compounding the harm caused by sexual assaults in the first place.

Briefing the media today, Mduzuzi Manana, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training said:

“As a sector, we want to acknowledge that our lecture rooms, offices, residences and other campus areas and their immediate vicinity are vulnerable to rape and sexual assault. As a sector, we want to state that each incident is unacceptable, unlawful and harmful.

“As a sector, we are now initiating consultations and collaborations that will lift this burden from the individual institutions and make it a sectoral and national priority, enabling us to work towards a significant drop in levels of SGBV. As a sector, we recognise that this is an urgent and necessary mission in order to protect students and staff and fulfil our mandate to educate South African youth and contribute to social and economic transformation and progress.”

The initiative involves the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Higher Education and Training HIV/AIDS Programme (HEAIDS) and role players from higher education institutions, research and capacity building organisations, government departments, social, police and justice services and the NGOs working in this field.

These partners are forming a technical task team that will conduct a needs analysis and prepare of a comprehensive SGBV strategy for the sector.

The task team and HEAIDS, which will act as the coordinating and supporting structure for this work, have sketched out an initial workplan which has identified five priority areas:

- i Policy framework: there is a need to understand existing policies and programmes and how they are being applied, identify gaps, document good practice and use this data as a foundation for extensive consultations prior to the formation and adoption of a sector-wide SGBV policy framework.
- ii Capacity development: when the policy framework is adopted, training to aid its implementation will be extended to campus-based peer educators and student formations, leadership, management and HR offices of higher education institutions and various providers of security, health and wellness and legal services.
- iii Consultation, advocacy and lobbying: efforts to improve dialogue, enhance education and communication, build consensus and resolve challenges will be at the heart of the approach in order to ensure that the needs of students and staff at risk are addressed and that the sector's objectives in this regard are met.
- iv Campus-based services: it is anticipated that many institutions and campuses will need assistance in making concerted efforts to provide accessible and efficient preventive and post-assault services.
- v Monitoring and evaluation: based on criteria and performance indicators to be developed, the achievements and the success of the sectoral programme will be monitored by HEAIDS and overseen by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

“The decade-long work by HEAIDS and many partners to bring youth- and campus-friendly accessible services to enable students and staff to take ownership of their health and wellness has built a valuable platform from which we can begin to engage on the issues of rape and violence,” says Dr Ramneek Ahluwalia, Director of HEAIDS.

He highlights that SGBV cannot be tackled in isolation – illustrated by World Health Organisation studies which suggest that 65% of partner violence in the country is associated with abuse of alcohol and drugs.

“The considered approach we wish to adopt in designing and rolling out a programme aimed at protecting our students and staff rests on dialogue with all affected and primarily those at greatest risk – the female students. With united commitment and resources, we believe we can ensure progress across our big sector so that no one feels alone and powerless. Our collective action will allow us to achieve two major goals: build a safety net for those at risk and reduce the place to hide and repeat violations for those who engage in rape and gender-based violence,” Dr Ahluwalia concludes.

Further information for journalists

Currently the Higher Education SGBV Technical Task Team (TTT) includes the following members:

Name	Position and organisation
Ms Ntsiki Sisulu Singapi	Chief Director, Department of Women
Prof Chrissie Boughey	Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, Rhodes University
Prof Jackie Dugard	Director: Gender Equity Office, University of Witwatersrand
Prof Rachel Jewkes	Director: Gender and Health Research Unit, Medical Research Council
Ms Siza Magangoe	DDG: Social Services, Department of Social Development
Ms Andile Mthombeni	Research Assistant and student representative, University of Witwatersrand
Ms Caroline Nyamayemombe	Regional Specialist, UN Women
Ms Mary Peters	Deputy Principal, Elangeni TVET College
Ms Cal Volks	Director: HIV/AIDS, Inclusivity and Change Unit, University of Cape Town
Mr Nick Balkrishen	Principal, Gert Sibande College
Ms Eyethu Makeke	SAFETSA: Gender Equity Officer
Ms Noluthando Hlubi	SAUS: Gender Equity Officer
Ms Dorcas Sthokozile Gcabashe	Student, SGBV activist and peer educator
Ms Vuyokazi Mafilika	Department of Higher Education and Training

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About HEAIDS

The Higher Education and Training HIV & AIDS national programme (HEAIDS) aims to develop and support HIV/TB/STI mitigation initiatives and promote health and wellness across South Africa's public higher education institutions (HEIs) and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges.

It is a programme of the Department of Higher Education and Training that is undertaken by Universities South Africa (USAf), the representative body of the 26 HEIs, in partnership with South African College Principals Organisation (SACPO), the representative body of 50 public TVETs.

As part of an increasingly comprehensive HIV/TB/STI mitigation programme in the higher education and training sector, HEAIDS implements the following projects in partnership with a range of public and private sector role players:

- First Things First HCT/TB/STI General Health & Wellness Programme
- Men Health and Empowerment Programme
- Women Health and Empowerment Programme
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme
- MSM and LGBTI Programme
- Academic Capacity Development Programme

- Future Beats Youth Development and HIV prevention through campus radio and social media.