

# PRIVATE SECTOR COALITION AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT CONCEPT NOTE

## ADDRESSING GBVF IN THE WORKPLACE.

GBVF has enormous economic and financial impact. The 2014 report released by KPMG, titled *Too Costly to Ignore – The Economic Impact of Gender-Based Violence in South Africa*<sup>1</sup>, pointed out that the whole of society pays for the costs attached to violence against women, including health care, justice, lost earnings, lost revenue, and lost taxes.

As GBVF can occur at any point throughout an organisation's value chain, every company has a role to play in addressing GBVF within itself (internal) and across its business relationships (supply chain) and society at large (communities, product/service users, families, and communities where its employees live).

### If not addressed, GBVF can pose a range of business risks such as:

-  Litigation, compensation claims and reputational damage.
-  A decrease in productivity due to absenteeism, poor performance at work and an increase in staff turnover.
-  Reduced access to talent and employee retention, as the fear of GBVF can affect the decisions people make about where they work and with whom they work and not making institutions as their first choice employers.

Until recently, GBVF had been approached primarily as a social issue and a public health concern, but the lack of progress and increase in GBVF has made it apparent that all stakeholders need to be included.

The private sector is a powerful partner in advancing gender equality at work, due to its distinctive position as a catalyst and role model for change. Without private-sector engagement, gender equality, which is instrumental to realising the UN SDGs<sup>2</sup>, will not be achieved.

## INTRODUCTION

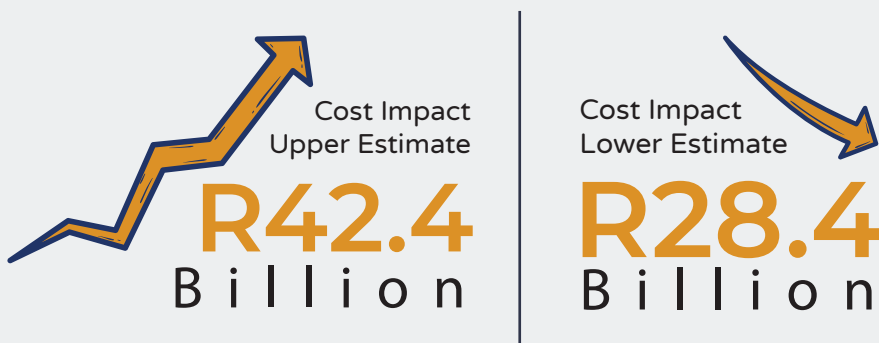
Gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) not only affects women at home, but also at work and society at large. Employers can no longer afford to turn a blind eye and GBVF in the world of work, with associated costs to worklife and this is where the GBVF Response Fund<sup>1</sup> (the Fund) has a pivotal role to play.

Since its inception in early 2021, the Fund has established a track record of mobilising funding and responding to some of the systemic issues that hamper progress. Research commissioned by the Fund, has shown that stakeholders expect the Fund to take a leadership role –as convenor, enabler, advocate, and champion of the work being done on the ground.

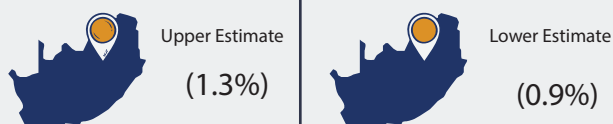
GBVF remains a critical and major challenge to realising the goal of equality between women and men in the workplace. The Fund is fully committed to playing a critical and active role as catalyst for making real change happen.

Hence, the Fund has partnered with the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), UNFPA and identified potential implementation partners as well as key stakeholders in corporate South Africa to form a Private Sector Coalition (the Coalition) and move policies to action.

## THE IMPACT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ON SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY



### GDP Impact



<sup>1</sup><https://home.kpmg/za/en/home/insights/2014/09/too-costly-to-ignore.html>

<sup>2</sup><https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



## ESTABLISHING A PRIVATE SECTOR COALITION.

The second Presidential Summit on GBVF, held in November 2022, presented an opportunity to honestly reflect on South Africa's successes and challenges for tackling widespread gender based violence in the country.

The event gave rise to critical feedback from the broader GBVF response community with the main sentiment being that there was too much talk and not enough action. Delegates felt that there was a lack of accountability from most government departments and that no significant progress or noticeable steps had been taken to implement and act on the National Strategic Plan on GBVF. The role and contribution of private sector was also put on the spotlight with a clear need for the private sector to take on a more active stand against GBV in the world of work and society as a whole.

The GBVF Response Fund is a recognised, trustworthy partner established by the private sector. The Fund is fully committed to being a champion for change, playing a critical and active role as a catalyst for making real change happen. Working in collaboration with the JSE, Presidency, UNFPA and ILO the Fund seeks to galvanise business to stand against any forms of violence in the world of work.

The Coalition will mirror #BusinessBelieves, a similar initiative successfully introduced in 2017 by Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA) whereby all its members committed to curbing and rooting out corruption in its own ranks.



**The vision for the Coalition** is to get CEO's to champion the fight against GBVH in their workplace and in society. There are already a number of businesses that have committed to eradicating GBV in their companies by not only providing funding to the GBVF Response Fund but also running their own initiatives. We believe it is important to not only create a movement against GBV but create a "Zero tolerance" approach to it in society.

## WHY THE PRIVATE SECTOR COALITION GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT (GBVH) MATTERS.

The PSC is a leadership advocacy initiative that is business's contribution to the implementation of the NSP on GBVF Pillar 1: Accountability, Coordination and leadership. The key outcome for this pillar is :



**BOLD LEADERSHIP, STRENGTHENED ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY THAT RESPONDS TO GBVF STRATEGICALLY AND WITH CLEAR MESSAGING AND ADEQUATE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES.**



From the government, the President has led the country in leading the fight against GBVF and this initiative is a call to action for business leaders to do the same.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly commit all countries to actively advance gender equality in the economy and to end all forms of violence and discrimination. Moreover, the SDGs paved the way for a series of global agreements such as the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention 190, generally referred to as C190, which specifically recognises the importance of

addressing sexual harassment in the world of work.

South Africa ratified ILO C190 on 29 November 2021, becoming the tenth country to do so. The objective of C190 is to eliminate all forms of harassment in the workplace, including virtual workplaces (such as being at home where employees work remotely). Accordingly, the Department of Employment and Labour amended the Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the Workplace (the Code) to include C190 principles. The code came into effect on 18 March 2022, and provides guidance on the policies and procedures to be implemented when harassment occurs in the workplace.

In as much as government needs to set an enabling environment to curb GBVF as seen with the National Strategic Plan on GBVF and the recent signing of the GBVF Bill, the private sector can be pioneers in accelerating the strategic engagement of employees and business leaders to play their part. This contribution must be through actively implementing internal policies that align with C190 and visible advocacy against GBVF in society- a whole of society approach must be implemented.

Such a framework will enable companies to deal with GBVF in the workplace in a focused and transparent way. It may also reduce the stigma, shame and fear associated with GBVF, empowering victims to communicate about it more openly and without fear and enabling perpetrators to seek professional help.





## KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

The PSC is established by the Fund, the Presidency, Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) will require deliberate and well-coordinated collaboration and action by key stakeholder groups and implementation partners to jointly achieve a positive outcome, i.e. to eradicate GBVF at work.

Jointly, we have the convening power to engage corporate South Africa, government, Civil Society Organizations and other UN agencies to support them to turn policy into action and drive specific advocacy, best practice protocols and behavior change campaigns to promote gender equality and eradicate GBVF in the workplace.



**THE FIGHT AGAINST GBVF IN THE WORKPLACE IS FAR FROM OVER AND CORPORATE SOUTH AFRICA HAS TO TAKE UP ITS ROLE TO TRANSFORM THE CULTURE IN THEIR RESPECTIVE ORGANISATIONS.**



### CALL TO ACTION

Employees are the greatest asset of every business. When viewing an organisation from this vantage point, it is important to harness the full potential of private sector, especially the responsibility of the business to value and care for everyone in their ecosystem, particularly employees as key company stakeholders.

The fight against GBVF in the workplace is far from over and corporate South Africa has to take up its role to transform the culture in their respective organisations.

We need to move labour policies and conventions like C190 to action by denouncing all forms of violence and inequity at work and addressing issues like toxic masculinity, patriarchy, and gender inequality still prevalent today.

Until women are safe at work, at home and in our communities, their contribution to society and the economy is recognised equitably, we cannot and will not prosper as a nation.

