



Commission
for Gender
Equality

NEWSFLASH

A Commission for Gender Equality Newsletter

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Vision:



An independent, constitutionally mandated organisation that pioneers and catalyses gender development and transformation.

Mission:



To lead, promote, protect, monitor, and evaluate gender equality through research, managing public education, policy development, legislative initiatives, and litigation.

Promoting Access to Justice in the Vhembe District

By Malebo Ntjana

On 13 August 2026, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), Limpopo Provincial Office, conducted a community outreach programme in Madimbo Village, Vhembe District. The outreach focused on access to justice, particularly in light of the concerning rise in domestic violence cases in the district.

During the engagement, the Commission outlined its constitutional mandate and role in promoting and protecting gender equality, while also sensitising community members on gender-based violence (GBV), domestic violence, and the barriers that survivors may encounter when seeking justice and support. The Commission highlighted the importance of reporting cases, accessing available support services, and holding institutions within the criminal justice system accountable for their responsibilities in responding to GBV.

The community was also informed about the Joint National Inquiry into the Reporting, Victim Support, Investigation and Pre-Trial Functioning of the Criminal Justice System Response to Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) in South Africa, being conducted jointly by the CGE, South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission). The community was encouraged to participate in the Inquiry by sharing their lived experiences, evidence, concerns and recommendations relating to GBV and the criminal justice system.

Importantly, the Commission informed community members that the deadline for submissions had been extended to 11 September 2026. The outreach therefore served as an important platform

for community education, awareness-raising and mobilisation, particularly in encouraging residents of Madimbo and surrounding communities to make their voices heard in the national Inquiry and contribute to efforts aimed at strengthening accountability, survivor protection and access to justice in South Africa's response to GBVF.



Stakeholders and participants during the outreach session



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Women's Day Commemoration



Nceba Mrwebo (first from right) with stakeholders at the CGE exhibition table at the engagement

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), represented by its Eastern Cape Provincial Manager, Mr Nceba Mrwebo, participated in the Women's Day Commemoration held in recognition of the historic 1956 Women's March and the 70th anniversary of this significant milestone in South Africa's history.

The CGE Provincial Manager delivered a presentation focusing on women's empowerment and the constitutional framework underpinning gender equality in South Africa. The presentation highlighted the Constitution as the cornerstone of the country's democratic dispensation, with its foundational values rooted in equality, non-sexism, non-racialism, human dignity and freedom.

Speakers reflected on the importance of recognising and honouring the struggles of the women of 1956, whose courageous resistance contributed significantly to the advancement of women's rights in South Africa. The issues raised included the pursuit of equal opportunities in employment, equal rights within marriage, and the broader recognition and protection of women's rights.

However, despite the significant gains made since 1956, women continue to face persistent socio-economic and human rights challenges. Poverty, unemployment, gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), teenage pregnancy and limited access to economic opportunities continue to undermine progress towards substantive gender equality. These challenges disproportionately affect women and girls and remain barriers to their full participation in social, economic and political life.

The commemoration therefore provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress made while

acknowledging the work that remains necessary to advance the rights and empowerment of women. The CGE emphasised the importance of continued collaboration among government, civil society and communities in addressing gender inequality and ensuring that women can enjoy their constitutional rights without discrimination. Amongst the Speakers on the day were Nelson Mandela Metro University Vice Chancellor Dr. Sibongile Mtwa, Chairperson of the multi-party women's Caucus honourable MPL Maqhubela, and executive Mayor of Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Municipality Ms. Babalwa Lubishe.

As part of the programme, the Eastern Cape Premier handed over support and deliverables to women-led cooperatives as part of efforts to promote women's economic empowerment. The support included sewing machines, two tractors and a cheque valued at approximately R300,000. These interventions are aimed at strengthening women-owned and women-led enterprises and improving their participation in the local economy.

CGE Joins Northern Cape Launch of Orange Month Campaign to End GBVF Galeshewe, Kimberley

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) has reaffirmed its commitment to combating gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) and advancing gender equality during the launch of Orange Month in Galeshewe, Kimberley.

The campaign, led by the Department of Social Development, brings together government departments, law-enforcement agencies, municipalities and civil society organisations in a collective effort to raise awareness and strengthen action against GBVF.

Delivering the CGE's message at the event, Provincial Manager Mr Solly Ngoveni outlined the mandate and functions of the Commission, emphasising the institution's important role in promoting and protecting gender equality in South Africa.

Mr Ngoveni encouraged members of the community to be proactive in addressing gender inequality and related challenges. He urged members of the public to report incidents and concerns involving gender discrimination and inequality to the CGE office.

He further highlighted that members of the public can make use of the

available WhatsApp communication channel to bring gender-related complaints and concerns to the attention of the Commission.

He stressed the importance of communities knowing their rights and using available institutions to seek assistance and accountability where gender inequality occurs.

The Orange Month launch served as an important platform for strengthening collaboration among stakeholders working to prevent and respond to GBVF.

The campaign recognises that ending GBVF requires sustained cooperation between government, communities, law-enforcement agencies and civil society.

The event was attended by, among others, the MEC for Social Development, MEC for Health, MEC for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, the Northern Cape SAPS Provincial Commissioner, representatives of the Frances Baard District Municipality, and civil society organisations.

The participation of these stakeholders demonstrated a shared commitment to intensifying efforts to prevent GBVF,

support survivors and promote safer and more equal communities across the Northern Cape.

The CGE's participation in the Orange Month campaign reinforces its call for communities to speak out against gender inequality and GBVF. Through awareness, reporting, education and coordinated intervention, stakeholders can contribute to creating communities where women, men, children and other vulnerable groups can live free from discrimination, violence and abuse.

As Orange Month continues, the message from the campaign remains clear: ending GBVF requires collective action, accountability and the active participation of every sector of society.



Provincial Manager Solly Ngoveni addressing participants at the launch

CGE Constitutional Accountability Session: Advancing Gender Equality and Structural Support for Women in Football

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), led by Commissioner HRH Princess Eurika Mogane, convened a Constitutional Accountability Session with the Mpumalanga Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation to address systemic barriers affecting women's participation and advancement in football. The engagement highlighted the need to dismantle structural barriers and ensure that girls and women have equitable opportunities to be identified, developed, supported and retained throughout their sporting careers.

Commissioner Mogane reflected on football's historic role as a vehicle for resistance during apartheid, noting that the struggle for equality must continue on the field by ensuring that women athletes have equal access to opportunities, resources and institutional support.

She celebrated Mpumalanga-born and -based talent, including Hildah Magaia, Nothando Vilakazi, Dineo Magagula,

Letago Madiba, Lerato Mavis Maiacane and Nelly Gameade. She noted that their achievements demonstrate the potential of women in football despite persistent resource and support challenges.

Representing the Head of Department, Mr Zwane outlined commitments to strengthen gender-responsive sports development. These include convening a Gender-Focused Sports Indaba, monitoring the implementation of CGE recommendations, strengthening pathways for female coaches and mentors, reviving grassroots youth leagues, mobilising public-private partnerships and auditing municipal sports facilities to address neglected or unsafe grounds.

Representing SAFA Mpumalanga, Mr Jabu Hlongwane highlighted the need for gender-responsive budgeting, subsidised referee fees and improved matchday security.

SAFA Mpumalanga also committed to continued engagement with the CGE and reporting on progress against agreed interventions.

The session provided an important platform for stakeholders to move from identifying challenges to measurable institutional action. The CGE will monitor the commitments made and assess progress towards creating an enabling, safe and equitable environment for women and girls in football.

The Commission remains committed to ensuring that constitutional guarantees of equality translate into tangible opportunities, resources, infrastructure and development pathways for women and girls in sport.

Uyinene Mrwetyana Foundation GBVF Awareness Walk

On 15 August 2026, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) Eastern Cape Provincial Office, represented by the Provincial Manager, Mr Nceba Mrwebo, responded to an invitation from the Uyinene Mrwetyana Foundation to participate in its annual Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) Awareness Walk. The event was held at the Beacon Bay Country Club in East London and brought together representatives from civil society, institutions of higher learning, government departments, law-enforcement agencies and youth formations.

The CGE joined other stakeholders, including the South African Police Service (SAPS), Masimanyane Women's Rights International and the University of Fort Hare, in delivering messages of support and solidarity in the fight against GBVF.

The keynote address was delivered by a former Miss Universe, who emphasised that addressing GBVF requires practical and systemic change rather than rhetoric alone. She highlighted the importance of confronting and addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and called for stronger multisectoral integration of programmes and

interventions. She noted that GBVF is a multifaceted societal challenge that requires collaboration among government, civil society, communities, institutions of higher learning and other relevant stakeholders.

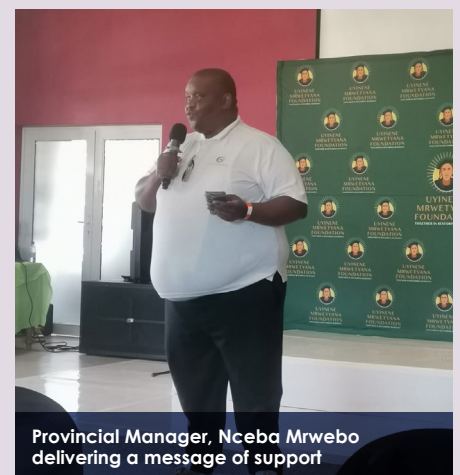
She further reminded participants that GBVF affects everyone and that behind the statistics presented by stakeholders are real people, families and communities whose lives have been profoundly affected by violence and femicide.

The CGE used the platform not only to deliver its message of support, but also to raise awareness about its mandate and services by distributing promotional materials addressing key gender equality issues, including trafficking in persons, GBVF, and the importance of engaging men and boys in preventing and combating GBVF.

The CGE Eastern Cape Provincial Office also encouraged participants to take advantage of the opportunity to submit to the Commission's inquiry into the criminal justice system's response to GBVF. Participants were encouraged to

share their experiences and perspectives to strengthen accountability and inform recommendations to improve the criminal justice response to GBVF.

The CGE's participation reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening partnerships and supporting collective efforts to prevent and eliminate GBVF in the Eastern Cape.



Provincial Manager, Nceba Mrwebo delivering a message of support

Access to Justice Week Reaches Residents of Dithakong, Kuruman

By Solly Ngoveni

Access to Justice Week commenced on 18 August 2026 in Dithakong, Kuruman, as government departments and Chapter 9 institutions joined forces to bring justice-related services closer to residents of the John Taolo Gaetsewe (JTG) District. The outreach programme is coordinated by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) and is aimed at ensuring that communities are informed about their rights and have access to relevant services and support.

The activities, which started on 18 August, will conclude on 20 August 2026. Participating institutions include the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.

The programme provides residents with an opportunity to engage directly with officials, raise concerns, seek information and learn about the services offered by the participating institutions. It also seeks

to strengthen awareness of legal rights and available mechanisms for addressing complaints and accessing justice.

Speaking on behalf of the CGE, Legal Officer Mr Thokozani Dladla sensitised participants about the mandate and work of the organisation. He explained the role played by the CGE in promoting, protecting and advancing gender equality and in addressing complaints relating to gender discrimination.

Mr Dladla also provided important information on the process of lodging complaints with the CGE. He encouraged participants who experience issues falling within the Commission's mandate to make use of the official complaint channels. Particular emphasis was placed on the CGE WhatsApp number, which provides complainants with an accessible platform through which they can seek assistance and initiate the complaints process.

The Access to Justice Week programme demonstrates the commitment of government and participating institutions to taking services directly to communities. Through initiatives such as this, residents of the JTG District are empowered with information that can assist them in understanding and exercising their rights.



Participants at the first day of the justice week programme

Oversight Monitoring – Strengthening Care and Institutional Accountability for GBV Survivors in Mpumalanga

Ensuring that survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) receive immediate, dignified, and trauma-informed care requires active institutional oversight and sustained accountability.

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) Mpumalanga Provincial Office, led by Commissioner Mogane, recently completed targeted oversight monitoring visits across critical frontline victim support and care centres in the province:

- Calcutta Victim Empowerment Centre (Mkhuhlu)
- Themba Hospital Thuthuzela Care Centre (Kabokweni)
- Rob Ferreira Hospital Thuthuzela Care Centre (Mbombela)

Core Focus of the Oversight Visits:

- Service Accessibility & Infrastructure: Assessing facility conditions, security, and the physical environment to verify that services remain accessible, responsive, and survivor-centred.

- Frontline Operational Realities: Identifying acute challenges, capacity bottlenecks, and resource constraints that impact healthcare workers, social workers, and legal officers.
- Standards of Survivor Care: Ensuring the continuum of care—from crisis medical response to long-term psychosocial and legal support—is administered with the dignity and urgency required.

While systemic challenges persist across public care networks, observing measurable operational improvements in several of these centres since our previous monitoring cycle is a notable step forward.

Progress must be sustained through dedicated resource allocation, intersectoral cooperation, and consistent institutional monitoring.

The CGE remains committed to holding duty-bearers accountable and ensuring our justice and care ecosystems serve vulnerable communities effectively.



Commissioner Mogane and Education Officer Augustine Mabuzza with TTC officials during the oversight visit.

Constitutional Oversight in Action: CGE & DOJ&CD Accelerate Access to Justice in Mpumalanga



On 14 August 2026, Commissioner HRH Princess Eurika Mogane, alongside the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) Mpumalanga Provincial Office—represented by Provincial Manager Ms. Moltah Mavuso and Legal Officer Mr. Sandile Useni—participated in the official closing of National Access to Justice Week 2026 at the Thulamahashe Community Hall in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality.

From Oversight to Direct Action:

This national intervention stems directly from proactive constitutional oversight. Strategic engagements were initiated by the CGE Mpumalanga Team with Ms. Maanda Nditsheni (Director of Legal Services, DoJ&CD Mpumalanga), placing critical systemic failures directly on the table:

- Unacceptable court backlogs and severe case processing delays.
- Lack of transparent communication and docket tracking for complainants.
- Alarming case withdrawal rates driven by intimidation, administrative fatigue, and social pressures.
- Targeted justice-delivery challenges within the Bushbuckridge region.

Recognising these pressing concerns, the National Department of Justice and Constitutional Development deployed the 2026 Access to Justice campaign directly to Thulamahashe to deliver immediate, grassroots redress

Key Messages from Commissioner HRH Princess Eurika Mogane:

Delivering the Commission's message of support, Commissioner Mogane addressed critical systemic and social challenges:

- **Executive Responsiveness:** Commended Deputy Minister Andries Nel, MP, and the Department for their prompt, decisive response in deploying national resources to Bushbuckridge following CGE submissions.
- **Restoring Public Trust & Integrity:** Emphasised the urgent need to repair broken systems and dismantle the dangerous misconception that justice is a commodity to be bought. She encouraged the community not to lose hope in the rule of law, reminding them that dedicated duty-bearers far outnumber those who compromise the system.
- **Breaking the Silence on GBVF:** Highlighted the plight of vulnerable women and children who face barriers in reporting or maintaining cases due to cultural pressures and fear of family embarrassment. She stressed that gender-based violence must never be concealed or treated as an internal "family matter."
- **True Gender Equality:** Reaffirmed the core principle of

equality, reminding participants that "the rise of a woman does not mean the fall of a man," calling for mutual respect, shared responsibility, and stronger community support structures.

Key Outcomes & Remarks by Deputy Minister Andries Nel, MP

The 4 Pillars of Access to Justice: Deputy Minister Nel outlined the Department's core principles for meaningful justice delivery:

- **Accessible:** Justice must be physically close enough for communities to reach.
- **Understandable:** Legal processes must be simple and transparent.
- **Affordable:** Financial constraints must never be a barrier to human rights.
- **Effective:** The justice system must work efficiently to make a tangible difference in society.

Continuous Service Delivery: Presenting localised case statistics for Thulamahashe, the Deputy Minister urged the community to actively utilise justice institutions, stressing that the commitment to serve communities and protect vulnerable groups continues every day beyond Justice Week.

- **Grassroots Impact:** Close to 500 community members were directly assisted with free legal advice, maintenance support, and primary justice services in the Bushbuckridge area during the week.
- **Cross-Border Anti-Trafficking Framework:** The CGE welcomed the Mpumalanga DoJ's exclusive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Republic of Mozambique to combat cross-border human trafficking syndicates and protect women and children.

Watch the full proceedings and live broadcast here:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/j1SZ6FO4f00>

Equipping Community Members on the Role of the CGE in Access to Justice

By Malebo Ntjana

On 19 August 2026, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), Limpopo Provincial Office, conducted an outreach programme at Ribacross in the Sekhukhune District. The outreach focused on raising awareness about the Commission's mandate, its role in promoting gender equality, and the services available to community members seeking assistance. The engagement also addressed gender-based violence (GBV), with the Commission highlighting the continued prevalence of GBV in South Africa and sharing relevant statistics reported by the South African Police Service (SAPS). Community members were encouraged to recognise and report abuse and were cautioned against remaining in abusive relationships for financial reasons, as prolonged exposure to violence can have devastating and potentially fatal consequences.

The Commission further discussed consent, emphasising the importance of understanding that consent must be freely and voluntarily given and that there are circumstances in which a person cannot consent. The community was also encouraged to report cases of child abuse and other human rights violations rather than remaining silent. Participants were informed about how and where they can approach the Commission for assistance. The CGE also explained that matters falling outside its mandate can be referred to the relevant institutions to ensure that community members receive appropriate support.

The outreach provided a valuable platform for dialogue, with participants actively engaging with the Commission and indicating that some of the information shared was new to them.

Overall, the outreach was successful in strengthening community awareness of gender equality, GBV, consent, human rights and available avenues for assistance.



Participants at the outreach programme

Women's Day Commemoration and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Awareness Outreach in the Eastern Cape

By Nceba Mrwebo

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), Eastern Cape Provincial Office, participated in a Women's Day and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness event hosted by Mquma Local Municipality in Ward 23, Mnyameni Location, Ncetane supported by sector departments.

The event brought together community members and various stakeholders, including the Department of Social Development, South African Police Service, Department of Employment and Labour, Department of Home Affairs, Independent Electoral Commission and representatives from places of safety.

In her address, the Executive Mayor of Mquma Local Municipality, Cllr Manxila-Nkamisa, acknowledged the significant contribution made by women in the struggle for liberation and gender equality. However, she expressed concern that many women in Mnyameni village continue to live in fear due to incidents of violence within the community.

The Mayor specifically raised concern about the recent killing of four elderly women in the area, noting that no arrests had been made in connection with these cases. She urged community members to work closely with law enforcement agencies by providing information that could assist in ensuring that perpetrators of these brutal crimes are identified and brought to justice.

The Mayor further emphasised that women's roles in society should no longer be confined to the kitchen and childbearing. She encouraged women to actively participate in leadership and decision-making structures and not to shy away from leadership opportunities. She cautioned women against allowing themselves to be reduced to reproductive roles while men occupy positions of leadership and influence.

She further reminded the community that South Africa has enacted laws aimed at protecting women and children from violence, abuse and economic deprivation. She encouraged community members to familiarise themselves with these laws and to utilise available support and protection mechanisms.

Various stakeholders provided messages of support and highlighted the services available to communities in addressing GBV, protecting vulnerable groups and promoting women's rights.

CGE Contribution

The CGE Eastern Cape Provincial Office used the opportunity to educate the community on the mandate and functions of the Commission. The community was informed that the CGE is empowered to receive and investigate complaints relating to violations of gender rights and to advocate for gender equality.

The CGE highlighted several gender-related violations that remain prevalent in communities, including forced and arranged marriages, sexual violence and harassment in schools, and various forms of abuse against elderly women.

Particular attention was given to the abuse of elderly women arising from false accusations of witchcraft. The CGE emphasised that such accusations can result in serious violations of the rights, dignity and safety of elderly women and may expose them to violence, displacement and, in extreme cases, death.

The CGE encouraged community members to report violations of gender rights and to work with relevant law enforcement and service-delivery institutions to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and that victims and survivors receive appropriate support.

The engagement provided an important platform for strengthening community awareness of gender rights, promoting women's participation in leadership, and mobilising stakeholders and community members to collectively address GBV and the abuse of vulnerable women, particularly elderly women.

Advancing Human Rights and Gender Equality for Persons with Disabilities in KwaZulu-Natal

By Tracey Gumede



Stakeholders in attendance at the Imbizo



The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Office of the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), in partnership with the KZN Deaf Society and eDeaf, recently conducted an outreach engagement focusing on the intersectionality of human rights, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and gender-based violence (GBV). The engagement created an important space for dialogue and rights education, while recognising that access to rights is influenced by the social, economic and structural conditions within which people live. For persons with disabilities, these conditions can create additional barriers to accessing information, services, justice and protection. The engagement therefore placed particular attention on the need for rights education that speaks to the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and responds to the different forms of exclusion they may encounter.

The disparities experienced by persons with disabilities cannot be understood through disability alone. Pervasive systemic barriers across communities and public institutions can contribute to unequal access to rights and services. Physical accessibility, communication barriers, limited access to appropriate assisting devices, inaccessible information and restrictions on movement can affect a person's ability to access healthcare, education, justice, social services and protection from violence. Where these barriers intersect with poverty, gender, age, geographic location and other social circumstances, the challenges can become even more difficult to navigate. A person may have a right to a service in law, but still experience considerable difficulty exercising that right when information is inaccessible, transportation is unavailable, facilities

cannot be accessed independently or appropriate communication support is absent.

These realities are particularly important when considering SRHR and GBV. Persons with disabilities have the same rights to make decisions about their bodies, relationships, health and reproductive lives, and to live free from violence, abuse and discrimination. Access to these rights requires more than the existence of services. It requires information that people can understand, services that they can physically access, communication that accommodates different needs, and systems that recognise persons with disabilities as rights holders who are entitled to participate in decisions concerning their own lives. Where these conditions are absent, vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, violence and exclusion can increase.

The role played by organisations such as the KZN Deaf Society is therefore important in bridging the gap between rights and the ability to exercise those rights in practice. Through community engagement, communication support, advocacy and connection with deaf communities, organisations working directly with persons with disabilities help ensure that information reaches people who may otherwise face barriers when engaging with institutions and service providers. The partnership with the CGE creates an additional avenue for communities to engage with questions of gender equality, human rights, discrimination, GBV and SRHR in a manner that is accessible and responsive to their experiences. At the same time, more needs to be done to

reach communities that continue to experience barriers and to equip more people with the information they need to understand and exercise their rights.

For the CGE, engagements of this nature form part of the wider work of creating spaces where communities can learn about gender equality and the different factors that influence people's experiences of rights. This includes understanding intersectionality, disability rights, access to justice, GBV, SRHR, discrimination, equality and non-discrimination, as well as the institutional and social barriers that can prevent people from accessing protection and services. Such conversations are important because gender inequality and discrimination do not affect everyone in the same way. People's experiences are influenced by the different circumstances that intersect in their lives, requiring responses that recognise these differences.

Through continued partnerships such as this, the CGE contributes to creating spaces for learning, dialogue and engagement on the barriers that affect the enjoyment of rights. Reaching more communities, strengthening accessible communication and equipping persons with disabilities with information about their rights are important steps towards a society in which equality, dignity and freedom from discrimination are experienced in everyday life.

The National Teenage Pregnancy Imbizo

By Lesego Zungu

On 17 August 2026, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) convened the National Teenage Pregnancy Imbizo, bringing together government departments, law enforcement, civil society, development partners, health practitioners, educators and young people to confront the drivers and consequences of teenage pregnancy in South Africa.

The dialogue created space for stakeholders to examine teenage pregnancy as a multisectoral issue, with discussions focusing on prevention, child protection, access to healthcare, psychosocial support, education, gender-based violence, statutory rape and coordinated interventions.

The Department of Social Development highlighted the importance of early intervention, psychosocial support, family support and child protection, emphasising that everyone has a responsibility to report suspected child abuse.

The Department of Health presented on the health sector response to adolescent pregnancy, including adolescent-friendly services, contraception, mandatory reporting and stronger coordination across sectors. While adolescent pregnancy has

declined, persistent challenges include sexual violence, poverty, school dropout, gender inequality, transactional sex, repeat pregnancies and unequal access to youth-friendly services.

The Department of Basic Education outlined its comprehensive approach to preventing and addressing early and unintended pregnancies, including Comprehensive Sexuality Education, reproductive health services and ensuring that pregnant learners are supported to remain in or return to school.

The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities presented South Africa's National Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy. The plan is aimed at strengthening coordination and accelerating efforts to reduce adolescent pregnancy, sexual coercion, child marriage and barriers to contraception and maternal healthcare.

United Nations Population Fund provided technical support on the development of the National Strategic Plan, highlighting the need for evidence-based interventions, measurable targets, effective coordination and meaningful participation of adolescents.

The National Prosecuting Authority and South African Police Service addressed the relationship between GBV, sexual exploitation, statutory rape and teenage pregnancy, highlighting the legal obligations to report sexual offences against children and the importance of effective investigation, prosecution and protection.

In her closing remarks, Commissioner Seehaam Samaai stressed that a pregnant child must be treated as a child first. A pregnancy involving a child aged 10–14 must raise questions about possible statutory rape, coercion, exploitation or abuse and require a coordinated response from health, education, social development and law enforcement.



The Commission Participates in the Launch of Higher Health's First Comfort Room

By Lesego Zungu



The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) on 20 August 2026 participated in the national launch of Higher Health's first Comfort Room. This engagement was held at the Ekurhuleni East TVET College, Springs Campus. The Comfort room initiative is aimed at creating safe, accessible and stigma-free spaces for young people and gender-based violence (GBV) victims and survivors across the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector.

The launch brought together government, students, survivors and key stakeholders to discuss strengthening responses to

GBV, mental health challenges and access to appropriate support services within institutions of higher learning.

Delivering an address, Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Honourable Mmapaseka Steve Letsike, described the launch as an important milestone. "Today is an incredible day, the launch of the Comfort Room," she said, noting that while the Comfort Room may initially appear to be a physical space, its meaning extends far beyond its physical structure.

She explained that Higher Health had conceived the Comfort Room as a safe space where students could pause, speak openly, access support and receive education about mental health, GBV and other psychological challenges. "A student does not stop being a vulnerable person when they register for a qualification, or a person with disabilities does not stop needing accessible accommodation because they are a student."

As part of the high-level panel discussion, CGE CEO Dr Dennis Matotoka reflected on the role of the Commission in the discourse of GBVF response in the higher learning sector. He noted that institutions of higher learning were not an island, but a microcosm of society, and therefore needed effective systems to respond to challenges arising from dominant patriarchal norms and violations of rights. Dr Matotoka said the Commission's role included monitoring the effectiveness of these systems, with access, quality, students' experiences and impact being key aspects to assess. He cautioned that establishing Comfort Rooms without monitoring their effectiveness could make these structures merely symbolic. "Our interest as the CGE is to come and monitor the effectiveness of the Comfort Room," he said.

The engagement highlighted the importance of ensuring that initiatives such as the Comfort Room translate into meaningful support for students and contribute to creating safer, more inclusive and responsive PSET institutions.