



**REPORT BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION
TO THE JOINT MONITORING COMMITTEE ON THE
IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE AND STATUS OF WOMEN**

Report of the Director-General

The Director-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women the report of the Department for Public Service and Administration on the activities and experiences of the Public Service to eliminate violence against women, and institutionalize human rights of women as key dimensions of governance.

Workplace Violence is defined in this report as

Cumulative or single incidents where employee(s) are physically attacked/assaulted or emotionally abused, pressurised, harassed or threatened (overt, covert, direct, indirect) in circumstances related to their work; challenging their right to dignity and respect with the reasonable likelihood of impacting adversely on their physical or emotional safety, health, well-being and social development. (Steinman 2002) Our definition includes: Any physical violence such as assault or attack or psychological/ emotional violence such as abuse, bullying/mobbing, threats, and sexual or racial harassment.



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1. General recommendation (1992) on violence against women of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted that gender-based violence is discrimination within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (1993) identified three main areas where violence against women occurs, namely in the family, the general community, and **perpetrated or condoned by the State, clarifying that such violence can take physical, sexual and psychological forms.**

2. Policy documents such as the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly of June 2000, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", and various other United Nations resolutions and outcomes elaborated further the forms of violence against women and the sites where it takes place, and actions to combat and prevent its occurrence. These documents also highlighted the ways, in which violence against women intersects with, and impacts on, other aspects of women's well being and their enjoyment of their human rights.

Workplace violence in the Public Service

3. Violence in the workplace, manifests in a variety of forms, with particular reference to the Public Service environment, women are known to fall victim to violence of sexual harassment or other forms of exploitation, including discrimination and social exclusion. Whoever the victim, women or men; whatever the form of exploitation — one of the primary concerns of the Department for Public Service and Administration is to safeguard and to protect the human rights of civil servants and clients (citizens). Violence directly undermines the values of the Constitution and accepted norms of good governance. It is a major source of inequality, discrimination, stigmatization and conflict at the workplace. Increasingly it is becoming a central human rights issue. At the same time, workplace violence is increasingly appearing as a serious threat to the efficiency and success of departments. Violence causes immediate and often long-term disruption to



interpersonal relationships, the organization of work and the overall environment. But, the lack of data on the nature, prevalence and incidence of the various types of workplace violence has regularly been highlighted as a major concern and barrier to effective policy making.

4. Public Service implementation of employment regulations and legislation policies and plans to combat violence against women include the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Labour relations Act, Occupational Health and Safety legislation, and the Public Service Employee Health and Wellness Policy framework, amongst others. These laws, policies and plans are general guidelines cover all workplaces and sectors.

5. In the DPSA's evolving work on the Public Service Employee Health and Wellness Policy framework, it has become apparent that there is (1) increasing numbers of workplace violence incidents. In 2002, at least 78% of South African employees claim to have experienced workplace violence¹ (2) there exists the negative impact of workplace violence on organizational and human costs.

6. Under the strain of reforms, growing work pressure and stress, social instability and the deterioration of personal interrelationships, it may be expected that workplace violence exists in the Public Service. It is our contention, that the problem is not new but has been ignored or neglected in the past. Increasingly, domestic violence and violence in communities at large, are spilling over into the Public Service. Recent studies, including the WHO country study on Southern Africa, confirms that workplace violence in the health sector is universal; although local characteristics may vary, and that it affects the health of both women and men, though some are more at risk than others. Although it may affect more than half of our health care workers (Di Martino, V., 2002 & Steinman, S. 2002., forthcoming).

7. The negative consequences of such widespread violence impacts heavily on the delivery of health care services, which include deterioration in the quality of care provided and the decision by health professionals to leave the health care professions. This in turn, may account for the reduction in health services available

¹ Steinman, S. Workplace Violence in the Health Sector – Country Case Study: South Africa. Geneva: ILO/ICN/WHO/PSI Joint Programme on Workplace Violence in the Health Sector, forthcoming working paper.



to the general population, and an increase in health costs. In the rural areas, equal access to primary health care may be threatened if health professionals, already a scarce resource, abandon the profession because of the threat of violence.

8. It has been estimated by a number of reliable studies that stress and violence together possible account for approximately 30% of the overall costs of ill health and accidents. Based on these figures, it has been suggested that stress/violence may account for approximately 0.5 – 3.5% of a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per year (Hoel, H., Sparks, K., Cooper, C., 2000).

9. The Public Service Employee Health and Wellness Policy framework and Human Resource Planning policy would have to further research and address costs as major negative impact of workplace violence. This is currently highlighted under various aspects of the Auditor-General's report and the National Productivity Institute research in terms of lost productivity, sick leave absences, and lost efficiency as direct costs. Indirect financial costs are addressed in some of the guidelines on HIV/AIDS in terms of loss of expertise, skills and education costs and management time that investigation may include. HR Management guidelines would address qualitative aspects of organizational costs, including effects on damage to the confidence and morale of staff, bad image and reputation of the Public Service department/provincial administration. Human costs, described as impact on the safety and welfare of staff or as the personal costs of emotional trauma suffered by victims and their families, must also be accounted for.

10. The objectives of the Public Service and Administration employment and governance responsibilities is to address and recognizes our obligation to develop standards and guidelines to provide safe workplaces for women and men. More work has to be done to require all departments and provincial administration to have systems in place to record incidents of violence against staff and have published strategies in place to achieve a reduction of such incidents. The Public Service implementation of laws, policy and plans are only a first step in accomplishing the goal to eliminate or reduce workplace violence².

² The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, ethnic or social origin, colour, age, culture, language, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, or marital status; however, entrenched attitudes and practices, as well as limited resources, restricted the practical effect of these protections in some cases. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention



11. Labour legislation and the OSHA stress that responsibility for a safe workplace is the employer's duty, which includes the protection from violence hazards. The Public Service regulations however, differentiate within the guidelines that identify additional stakeholders with duties, not only employers or departments, but also line managers supervising workplaces, and include employees' duties (and women's duties) as an additional aspect of responsibility. The Public Service and Administration recommends a systemic approach, mentioning not only employers and employees as responsible persons, but identifying responsibilities within the hierarchy levels: Organization (management/policies), work team and individual. Some of the policies mention to consult with occupational health and safety representatives and quality of work life counselors. Security guidelines cover a broad spectrum of workers, as well as less qualified and ancillary personnel (maintenance, clerical, security).

12. Systemic changes and public service reforms induce economic marginality of women, for example, as a result of outsourcing and the informalization of work. Provincial labour market stratification/gender ordering is as evident in recruitment and employment dynamics of women and men in the public sector, as it is evidenced in our dual economy. Economic marginality has implications for social inclusion. Unstable economic conditions lead to social instability - marginal employment is associated with family breakdown - while also reducing the level of social protection available. Therefore, it is our view to adopt 'critical social policy', and to begin from a view of social policy that is underpinned by social inequality - particularly the inequalities of class, race and gender, in reviewing Public Service employment and governance regulations, policies and plans.

E-Governance

13. The use of the Internet to perpetuate violence against women is a growing concern in Southern Africa. Continuing on the theme, *Enhanced Communication Strategies*, I will focus on this theme in the context of the DPSA's responsibilities for the national e-government strategy and implementation plans of action.

of Unfair Discrimination Act places a responsibility on the State and any person in the public domain to promote equality. The Act addresses discrimination in a broad context in the workplace, health care, education, services, pensions, and other socio economic areas.



14. The World Summit on the Information Society held in Tunis in November 2005, recognized that a gender divide exists as part of the digital divide in society and reaffirmed the commitment to women's empowerment and the a gender equality perspective to overcome this divide.

15. At the recent 50th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the CSW panel discussion on "Women 2000 and Beyond: Gender Equality and empowerment of women through ICT", emphasized that a focus on the gender dimensions of information and communications technologies is essential for preventing and combating an adverse impact of the digital revolution on gender equality and the perpetuation of existing inequalities and discrimination.

16. According to the Geneva Principles on Internet Governance, it is the role of national government to "incorporate regulatory, self-regulatory, and other effective policies and framework to protect children and young people from abuse and exploitation through ICT's into national plans of action and e-strategies." OP(q).

17. ICT is a powerful tool to improve governance and strengthen workplace democracy and citizen empowerment. It can help to foster governance that is more transparent by enhancing interaction between government and citizens, NGOs and civil society debate, promoting equity and equality, and empowering minorities (source pg.106). It can be particularly powerful in providing a voice to women who have been isolated and invisible.

18. In the Department for Public Service and Administration's 2006-2009 medium term strategy, e-government is a priority area that aims to implement programmes that apply ICT in delivering government services and promoting transparency and accountability. We do however, need to look beyond delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means, to the issue of e-governance, and give focus to ICT innovations to strengthen the public voice to revitalize democratic processes, and refocus public management, structure and monitoring of government that better serves the public interest. E-governance is significant for the exercise of citizenship and direct public participation, both of which are key elements in women's empowerment and achievement of gender equality.



INTEGRATED DATA SYSTEMS AND CONSOLIDATED STATISTICS

19. The Public Service information systems and technologies (IS/IT) are evolving. With a lack of data it has been difficult to provide factual evidence to policy makers. Historically, the DPSA has not collected sex-disaggregated data. In this respect, attention should be given to abnormally high levels of absence on the grounds of sickness, high levels of staff turnover and records of violent incidents.

20. In the Public Service, the types of data currently available and collected are the rates in illness/injury or incident reports, secondary data of disciplinary cases. There are no data on the types of violence against women. Currently, aspects of missing data includes, direct costs of legal liabilities by departments, lost work and security measures/installations. Indirect costs of reduced efficiency and productivity, deterioration in the quality of service provided, hard to fill vacancies or retaining qualified personnel, loss of image. Through the Public Watch monitoring and evaluation system, this data can be collected, analysed in context and periodically reviewed.

21. Most common methodologies that are used to collect and analyze the data are employee surveys, analysis of secondary personnel data. (Not aware of any collated crime and health statistics in Public Administration, except as may be done at a country level by the SAHRC).

22. The scope of data collection at national, provincial and local levels can be systematized, and integrated/collated through enhancing existing IS/IT systems, of *Vulindlela*, and the *Public Watch* monitoring and evaluation system. The Presidency's monitoring and evaluation system could assist with the provision of internationally accepted baseline indicators for sex disaggregated reporting and evaluation.

23. Current practices that should continue are that top management are mostly responsible for, or contribute to data collection including, unions, personnel administration, medical and remuneration sections. We will promote increasing processes of dialogue, consultation, negotiation and all forms of cooperation among levels of government and between government departments, senior management and workers, trade unions and professional bodies, specialists, advocacy groups and



NGOs active in the areas of workplace violence, health and safety, human rights and gender promotion.

24. The challenge of under- and non-reporting of violence against women in the Public Service, is to address costs as major negative impact of workplace violence. This is currently highlighted under various aspects of the sick leave absences. Indirect financial costs are addressed in some of the guidelines on HIV/AIDS in terms of loss of expertise, skills and education costs and management time that investigation may include. The challenge presents in addressing the qualitative aspects of organizational costs, including effects on damage to the confidence and morale of staff, bad image and reputation of the Public Service department/provincial administration; Human costs described as impact on the safety and welfare of staff or as the personal costs of emotional trauma suffered by victims and their families, are also a challenge.

25. To tackle the complex problem of workplace violence, it is DPSA's recommendation to use a comprehensive multi-dimensional approach/methodology with a mix of risk control measures. It is recognized that workplace violence arises from multi-factorial causes, not only determined by individual factors of offender and victim, but rather by situational, organizational, interactional and even structural respectively societal factors. It is our recommendation to adopt accepted practice of the most appropriate strategy being the risk-management approach, which consists in risk assessment, risk control measures and review of strategies.



APPENDIX 1: Definitions

Corporate Aggression refers to all situations where the majority of employees or any minority group feel subjected to unilateral conscious, calculated or planned negative actions, attitudes, rules and/or policies imposed by the employer to serve the employer's interests, in a situation where these employees feel that they are collectively unable to defend themselves and/or approach and/or reason with the source of aggression and/or effect any changes. (Steinman, 2002)

Workplace Violence refers to the cumulative or single incidents where employee(s) are physically attacked/assaulted or emotionally abused, pressurised, harassed or threatened (overt, covert, direct, indirect) in circumstances related to their work; challenging their right to dignity and respect with the reasonable likelihood of impacting adversely on their physical or emotional safety, health, well-being and social development. (Steinman 2002). Includes: Any physical violence such as assault or attack or psychological/ emotional violence such as abuse, bullying/mobbing, threats, and sexual or racial harassment.

Bullying/Mobbing is defined as repeated and overtime offensive behaviour through vindictive, cruel or malicious attempts to humiliate, marginalize or undermine an individual or groups of employees and includes, but is not limited to, psychological pressure, harassment, intimidation, threats, coercion, conspiracies, manipulation, extortion and hostile and unfair behaviour which could impact on the worth, dignity, emotional and physical well-being and health of the victim (Steinman, 2003)

Harassment refers to any conduct based on age, disability, HIV status, domestic circumstances, sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion or belief, national or social origin, association, birth or other status that is unreciprocated or unwanted and which affects the dignity of men and women at work (Adapted from the Bill of Rights, South African Constitution)