Practitioner’s Perspectives on a National South African Higher Education Institution Policy Framework Mitigating Gender-Based Violence at a South African University
Governance, Implementation Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT
Gender-based violence (GBV) is a crime that violates the right to life, equality, human dignity, freedom and security of a person (South African Constitution, Act No 108 of 1996). The prevention and management of GBV is a critical transformation imperative and has in recent years (2014 to 2021) come under the spotlight at South African universities. The National Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) developed a policy framework to guide post-school education and training institutions to address GBV in 2020.

This article is a practitioner’s assessment and reflection of how the DHET policy framework on GBV can be implemented at Stellenbosch University, a public higher education institution (HEI) in South Africa. We look at how to integrate recommendations made in the GBV policy framework at South African universities and what are the current constraints that throttle GBV interventions. We reflect on existing mechanisms and policy recommendations that still need to be operationalised to effectively respond to GBV at universities. This article further assesses how

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institutional policy development, professional administrative and support services, and senior leadership structures can be leveraged to include, and efficiently implement, some of the GBV policy framework recommendations to address GBV at HEIs and in South Africa more broadly.

**KEYWORDS**
gender-based violence, universities, higher education, policy development

**Background**
Gender-based violence (GBV) has reached pandemic proportions in South Africa (Beyene et al., 2019; Muluneh et al., 2020). A retrospective national study of female homicide in South Africa found that 8.8 per 100,000 women (14 years and older) were killed by an intimate partner in 1999 (Mathews et al., 2004). These figures imply that four women per day were killed by an intimate partner or that one woman was killed every six hours by an intimate partner in South Africa. A study of femicide between 1999 and 2009 found that the rate of female homicide per 100,000 female population in 2009 was 12.9 (95% confidence interval (CI): 9.3, 16.5), compared to 24.7 (95% CI: 17.7, 31.6) in 1999 (Abrahams et al., 2013). In 2012, Gender Links (2012) conducted a study in various South African provinces which found that 77% of women in Limpopo, 51% in Gauteng, 45% in the Western Cape and 36% in KwaZulu-Natal had experienced some form of GBV and that men were the main perpetrators of this violence. In addition, 76% of men in Gauteng, 48% in Limpopo and 41% in KwaZulu-Natal admitted to perpetrating GBV. Recent national GBV statistics increased to 2,320 complaints during the first week of the global lockdown (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). This figure amounts to 37% higher than the weekly average of 87,290 domestic violence cases reported to the South African Police Services during 2019 (Enaifoghe et al., 2021).

Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa contains the "Bill of Rights" which ensures equality and human dignity to all South Africans and prohibits GBV in any form. The Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (Act No. 32 of 2007) (SORMA) is the main body of legislation dealing with sexual violence against adults, children and people with disabilities (DHET, 2020). Major laws and legislation that govern South African universities include the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (Act No. 4 of 2000), the Protection from Harassment Act (Act No. 17 of 2011) and the Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (DHET, 2020).

At the end of 2019, there was a countrywide outcry in South Africa and large-scale protest action as a result of GBV, following the death of Uyinene Mrwetyana (Geldenhuys, 2021). Davids (2019) proposes that there is a misconception that GBV does not occur in universities because it is believed that people in universities adhere to liberal ideals. Davids (2019) argues that students who come to universities are more vulnerable to being victims of GBV. The seemingly unrestricted environment offered by university campuses, as students are away from their homes, allows them to act out behavioural patterns which have been ingrained in them through their early socialisation, such as the right of men to have sexual intercourse.
(Davids, 2019). Collins et al. (2009) assert that first-year students find themselves in an unfamiliar social environment with few constraints and greater opportunities for experimentation with alcohol, drug use and sexual behaviour that they did not have the freedom to do before going to a university. This suggests that these students are likely to fall victims to abuse because of their age, their lack of knowledge of institutional reporting procedures and their understanding of boundaries and protecting their personal spaces. Defenclessness and lack of supervision may increase the chances of victimisation (Gialopsos, 2017). GBV in university settings is normally characterised by stalking, sexual harassment, assault and rape. Various students and staff are experiencing systemic forms of latent, unfair discrimination, GBV, intimate partner violence and various other forms of sexual harassment, often without the will to come forward. Therefore, universities need to keep building trust in staff, processes, partners and systems through compassion, leadership, accountability, confidentiality and procedural fairness (Stellenbosch University, 2018).

It is important to understand the many far-reaching and impactful international activism efforts for social change regarding GBV. International online activism around GBV has been at the forefront of many movements to combat and fight against the status quo of unacceptable levels of GBV all over the world. According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) (2019):

Through social media, women have a new space to speak up and be heard. With its power to encourage solidarity and collect shared experiences, social media has become a new frontier for women’s rights activists to organize and allies to join the fight for equality and justice. From politicians and lawmakers to farmers and small business owners, conversations are connecting women around the world so they can support one another in the push for gender equality.

Noteworthy international and South African hashtag social media-based anti-GBV campaigns and activism since 2014 include: #MeToo, #TimesUp, #NiUnaMenos, #HeForShe, #OrangeTheWorld, #BringBAckOurGirls, #WhyIStayed and #AmINext.

University students played an active role in these protests and focused attention on higher education institutions’ (HEI) responses, proposing an intersectional approach to combat GBV. Intersectionality is a key concept of feminist theory to better conceptualise and understand society and GBV. According to Weldon (2008), intersectionality can be defined as:

a concept that describes the interaction between systems of oppression. The concept grew out of efforts to specify how race and gender relations shaped social and political life. Black feminists argued that their problems and experiences could not be described as the problems of black men plus the problems of white women. Black women face many problems as black women, and their unique perspectives, identities, and experiences, cannot be derived from examination of the experiences and position of either black men or white women … allowing the possibility that there are additive and multiplicative as well as intersectional effects of gender, race, and class. (p. 206)

Weldon (2008, p. 217) also explores the role of intersectionality among the feminist activist community:
there has also been some use of the concept of intersectionality as a normative goal, or preferred mode of organizing. Even in the purely scholarly context, it is clear that the argument is that feminist scholars ought to attend to the intersectional nature of social structures of gender, race, class (etc.) inequality. In this more normative sense, “doing intersectionality” often seems to mean attending to differences among women, working to ensure that the unique perspectives of marginalized groups of women are not silenced, excluded, or overshadowed by those of more privileged women.

This intersectional approach has largely been adopted by frameworks addressing GBV in HEI in South Africa and can be seen expressed in a number of ways. First is the recognition of the fluid and varied nature of gendered identities and expressions in concerns about GBV. GBV is no longer concerned only with violence against women. Second is the recognition of the role of socio-economic factors in vulnerability to GBV, and access to anti-GBV resources. Finally, in the recognition of how other vulnerabilities such as disability and race can mediate experiences of GBV.

The anti-GBV outrage and protests (including their insistence on an intersectional approach) prompted a review of institutional culture, policies, and practices addressing domestic violence, intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, harassment and homophobic bullying at many universities. In 2019, a Ministerial Task Team was appointed to advise the Minister of the National Department of Higher Education and Training on matters of sexual harassment and GBV in South African universities. The DHET subsequently developed the *Policy Framework to Address Gender-Based Violence in the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) System* (DHET, 2020). Through it, the DHET is attempting to create an enabling and inclusive environment for the eradication of GBV while instilling respect, protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights as enshrined in the “Bill of Rights” in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996 (DHET, 2020). On the higher education sectoral level, Universities South Africa (USAF) called for a meeting of university vice-chancellors with President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, to plan an improved national anti-GBV strategy.

Contextualisation

Stellenbosch University (SU) is a public university situated in the town of Stellenbosch, with four other campuses, in the Western Cape province, South Africa. There are approximately 31,540 registered students, of which 64.3% are undergraduate, 33.2% postgraduate and 2.6% occasional students (Stellenbosch University, 2020). Students either live in university housing (7,654) or private accommodation (23,886), and there are 4,000 foreign students from 100 countries. The university has 3,000 permanent staff members.

Traditionally, the purpose of universities is to provide education, training, research, and social impact (Jansen, 2017; Park, 2003). However, Wagih (2017) asserts the notion of a university as an “institution-in-becoming” (p. 2), an engaging and listening university, one that is willing to be self-critical and conceptualising itself to the challenges it faces. Like other HEIs in South Africa, SU is not exempted from the widespread and embedded challenges of inequality and GBV. In 2015, students who were aligned with the #OpenStellenbosch
movement staged a march to raise their discontent with the way sexual harassment was dealt with by the institution. In 2016, the university appointed a task team to urgently investigate rape culture at the institution and make the necessary recommendations (Stellenbosch University, 2017). One of the recommendations emanating from the work of the task team was that the university implement an anonymous survey amongst SU students to better understand and monitor rape culture and GBV at the institution. The task team also recommended that resources (physical, human and financial) be made available to activate this much-needed monitoring function.

This was during the same year the SU Council approved the Policy on Unfair Discrimination and Harassment (Stellenbosch University, 2016), which then led to the establishment of the Equality Unit (EqU). The unit coordinates, educates and raises awareness around equality, gender-based violence, sexualities, HIV/AIDS and anti-discrimination among students and staff. In 2018, a gender non-violence role was instituted to coordinate, monitor and provide student movement support, as well as training, interventions, liaising for a comprehensive institutional response to GBV, sexual harassment and rape culture at SU. In 2019, the GBV and sexual assault online survey was conducted by the EqU with a sample of 1,166 (n = 1,166) students participating anonymously. The results of the survey helped to indicate the scale of the problem, and provided critical information to better inform the development of appropriate policies and systems, and review existing reporting and support protocols within SU.

Currently, GBV-related interventions are coordinated by the EqU. GBV interventions include communication and marketing of GBV-related awareness campaigns, prevention, the management of cases reported and the monitoring and coordination of an institutional response. The university also has the Unit for Psychotherapeutic Support Services (UPSS) and Campus Health Services (CHS) that offer after-hours support for students in psychological or medical crisis via a 24-hour emergency line in partnership with ER24. Incidents are then followed up by UPSS or CHS staff during working hours. Campus Security also play a vital role as they are often the first point of contact for crisis and traumatic incidents, and are well trained in internal protocols and services.

Following the nationwide anti-GBV protests in 2019, a student-led movement called the Anti-GBV Movement also came into existence to protest the SU response to GBV. A significant protest was held at SU, and the anti-GBV student movement compiled and submitted an anti-GBV Memorandum (2019) to SU management in September 2019. The memorandum elucidated issues such as the security of students on campus, mental health and the prevention of students with pending GBV cases from standing for student leadership positions. The submission of this memorandum to SU management led to the establishment of joint anti-GBV working groups by staff and students to investigate the issues that were raised by the students, and ultimately to improve SU’s GBV response, including training, support, policy development and interventions. Six working groups were overseen by a member of the Rectorate each, and the groups had representation from university structures most relevant to the topics under discussion, as well as from students. The working groups reported to the Rectorate, through the Senior Director: Student Affairs. The six working groups were: Values and Principles; Procedures and Processes; Residences and
Structures; Mental Health, Alcohol and Substance Abuse; Training and Awareness; Safety and Security. These groups were tasked to investigate GBV at SU and state how they impact negatively on the university community. The task teams were requested to make specific and implementable recommendations linked to various line functions, and across responsibility centres and faculties.

Following the task team report, an institutional anti-GBV strategy was set up in 2021 that gives direction on appropriate infrastructure and operationalisation, as well as the reporting process and prevention initiatives from the EqU to senior management.

**Current Constraints that Throttle GBV Interventions at HEIs**

Universities share commonalities in their response to GBV, how GBV is perceived and how institutions respond to this form of violence (Collins et al., 2009). According to the USAF CEO, Professor Ahmed Bawa, HEIs need to do more than simply acknowledging the prevalence of GBV. HEIs must work towards change in society and universities must reflect this social change, as well as the change of behaviours that perpetuate GBV (Naidu, 2019). With the guidance of the Policy Framework against GBV provided by DHET, there are existing anti-GBV interventions at SU, however, there are various constraints that throttle GBV interventions.

**Societal factors**

A myriad of factors contribute to the cause of GBV in societies, such as patriarchal norms, culture and traditions, and political and economic power (Davids, 2019). First, patriarchal norms, which stem from the social system where men hold primary power in our societies, has led to the power imbalances between males and females, thus enhancing gender inequality. The power exerted could relate to the economic, political, gender, access, resources and education (Foucault, 1997). These norms are often internalised by individuals and have led to binary gender stereotypes, normative expectations of femininity, masculinity and sexuality, and further embedded rape culture. Bloom (2008) reiterates GBV is a result of unequal power relations between genders and not only women but anyone who does not conform to gendered forms of conduct or is perceived as “less-than normal” therefore deserves to be controlled or violated.

In 2016, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation released a brief review on a study that highlights issues that contribute to GBV in South Africa and highlighted that, despite South Africa’s renowned constitution and progression, South African society is deeply patriarchal and patriarchal practices are most likely the root causes of GBV (South African Human Rights Commission, 2018). Secondly, the report highlights SA’s history of violence as it contributes to GBV. In addition, there are cultural and traditional practices in communities where violence against women is normalised.

Universities are microcosms of society, thus when students and staff enrol in the institution their perceptions and how they are socialised influence their beliefs with regards to GBV. In our experience, especially during training sessions, several individuals hold on to very rigid patriarchal norms, and at times we find ourselves stuck between respecting
peoples’ beliefs and wanting to encourage open-mindedness and empathy, creating a challenge for GBV interventions.

Under-reporting of incidences of GBV
The under-reporting of incidences is a fundamental challenge in addressing GBV interventions. Research confirms an equally high spread of GBV and under-reporting to law enforcement and institutional structures across geographical contexts. In a study on the prevalence and correlates of GBV amongst female university students in northern Nigeria, Iliyasu et al. (2011) found that many female students did not report physical or sexual violence to the universities due to ignorance of the redress mechanisms, fear of stigma and shame, a reappraisal of attacks from the perpetrators and not expecting effective action from the institution.

According to the existing literature of GBV at HEIs in South Africa, several factors influence under-reporting, which include fear of a perpetrator finding out and the potential repercussions or victimisation, a lack of confidence in institutional response mechanisms and concern over how authorities such as the institution and police will handle the case (Adams et al., 2016; de Klerk et al., 2007; Gouws & Kritzinger, 2007). The fear of a perpetrator finding out could be based on existing power imbalances, for example, an incident between a student and their lecturer, and the repercussions especially for the victim who is more often in a disadvantaged position.

In our aforementioned survey, participants were asked the likelihood of reporting an incident to internal structures at SU such as the EqU, Campus Security or a lecturer. Despite the services offered by the EqU, according to the survey report, the likelihood of participants reporting to internal structures at SU is notably low (5.2% indicated that they are likely to report to their lecturer, 11% to the EqU and 52% indicated that they are less likely to report to internal structures at SU). In our experience, additional factors that influence under-reporting are when the victim is acquainted with the perpetrator and the fear of victim-blaming. A study on sexual assault on American campuses found that most sexual assaults were committed by acquaintances of victims, which, in part, may explain why some cases are under-reported (Belknap & Erez, 2007; Rennison & Addington, 2014). In addition, victim-blaming occurs when the validity of survivors’ accounts is questioned and centred on what they were wearing, whether they were intoxicated and why they were where they were when the incident occurred (Ward et al., 2018). Under-reporting throttles GBV interventions because we are unable to fully understand the severity of GBV on campus and thus, review the efficacy of interventions.

Negative perceptions of the institution
The remaining two factors that impact under-reporting and GBV interventions are premised on distrust and negatively skewed perceptions of the institution. According to the survey report, students have a negative perception of SU regarding GBV, the institution’s awareness and perceived fairness of SU’s assault policy and resources. We contemplate that these perceptions are in part due to the lack of trust towards the institution and the belief that nothing will be done by SU structures regarding reported incidences. If students do not
report incidences or believe that the institution will not be helpful, the full extent of GBV at SU will be unknown and this poses a challenge when implementing evidence-based GBV interventions.

**Lack of understanding of the definition and scope of GBV**

In our training, case management and mediation sessions we have found that at times students do not seem to comprehend the severity of all forms of harassment and assault. In terms of what constitutes sexual harassment, it often starts with unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. In our experience, we find that individuals seem to think that only penetration constitutes sexual assault. However, sexual assault includes, and is not limited to, fondling or unwanted sexual touching, forcing a victim to perform sexual acts such as oral sex, attempted rape and rape (Stellenbosch University, 2016). Further, we have found that the severity of other forms of sexual harassment in terms of verbal and non-verbal conduct such as sexual advances, unwelcomed insinuations, indecent exposure and unwelcome gestures is often undermined by perpetrators and victims to an extent where they might not see the need to report such acts. This is influenced by the normalisation of rape culture. Many staff and students do not seem to understand how problematic rape culture is and how these “normalised” aggressions and comments perpetuate GBV. In addition, throughout our interaction with students, we have found that there seems to be an educational gap when it comes to what constitutes consent, and we have found that at times individuals do not have conversations regarding consent; they simply misread the actions and gestures of others. Thus, the lack of understanding and scope of what constitutes GBV and the lack of conversations regarding consent poses challenges to GBV interventions.

**Alcohol and/or drug consumption**

Early in 2020, SU temporarily banned the consumption of alcohol on campus. The decision was influenced by numerous incidences that occurred particularly at residence spaces, and alcohol and substance abuse was brought up in discussions to combat GBV (Schoonwinkel, 2020). According to the 2019 GBV and sexual assault survey report, more than 50% of participants indicated that alcohol and/or drugs were involved when the incident occurred, and 33% indicated that no alcohol and/or drugs were involved. It is important to note that we do not believe that alcohol and/or drug consumption is an overarching reason as to why incidents happen, however, we are acknowledging that alcohol and drug use can be one of the challenges we face when approaching GBV interventions. For more perspective, in Malcolm Gladwell’s (2019) book, *Talking to Strangers*, he mentions that alcohol induces “myopia”, like the loss of inhibition, which can lead to people possibly misunderstanding each other’s intentions. Gladwell simply provides an additional perspective on how excessive alcohol and drug use influences behaviour and, most importantly, he sheds light on why campus drinking culture is harmful.

In terms of alcohol consumption and how it challenges GBV interventions, the university’s major campus is located in Stellenbosch, which is a small town with many bars and nightclubs very accessible to students. It is therefore challenging for the institution to try to mitigate alcohol consumption that occurs off-campus. A recent study on perceived risk
factors of GBV among Ethiopian university students by Kaufman et al. (2019) found that many participants reported that alcohol consumption in town and nightclubs leading to intoxication led them to be particularly vulnerable to GBV. In essence, the institution is unable to mitigate these risks as we are unable to prescribe students’ movements and behaviour in public settings.

**Lack of monitoring and research tools to evaluate the efficacy of GBV interventions**

SU has put in place interventions recommended by the Policy Framework to Address Gender-based Violence in the PSET system, such as the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD), and external medical emergency services (in this case ER24), CHS and EqU services. However, there is a lack of standardised and integrated monitoring and evaluation tools to evaluate the efficacy of GBV interventions at SU. Without clear monitoring and evaluation tools, we are unable to provide the necessary data to guide strategic planning of interventions and whether our approach is suitable for combating GBV at SU.

A significant amount of reported GBV cases take place in HEIs. Thus more research regarding GBV in higher education is needed including exploring the curricula, institutional cultures, management and governance of HEIs (Davids, 2019). The results of our online survey were able to indicate the scope of GBV and sexual assault at SU. However, there is a lack of research to help understand the full scale of the problem, which includes: why students do not report to the EqU or the South African Police Services; why there is a negative perception of the institution; and the effectiveness of GBV training. We also do not have a clear picture on how these phenomena are related and reinforce each other. Therefore, there is a great need for research that can provide a clearer understanding of the degree of GBV and the success of GBV interventions at SU.

**A Reflection on the Way Forward and HEI Policy Development Suggestions**

SU needs to have a clear institutional strategy on GBV. Students have raised many issues in the past few years and requested that SU should have integrated systems and clear processes of dealing with GBV. SU should commit itself to “zero-tolerance” for GBV, and therefore a proactive and integrated institutional strategy focusing on prevention, disciplinary processes and education needs to be rolled out. The cases of GBV in the last few years within the university, at other universities and within the broader society beyond the university, have proven that more needs to be done. This means that institutional ownership of an anti-GBV strategy is crucial. University senior management needs to speak in one voice, decisively and clearly, expressing its commitment to provide leadership in driving the anti-GBV strategy. Proactive measures should be implemented, working inclusively with the entire university community.

Through the policy framework, the DHET is attempting to create an enabling and inclusive environment for the eradication of GBV while instilling respect, protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights as enshrined in the “Bill of Rights” in the Constitution of the
Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996 (DHET, 2020). GBV is included in the SU Transformation Plan of which an “Institutional Transformation Report” must be provided to the DHET annually. The DHET framework will inform the development of a reconfiguration of the current SU Unfair Discrimination and Harassment Policy. SU was included in the drafting of the DHET Policy Framework, and it provides a clear guide for SU to enhance anti-GBV activities and services in a systematic and integrated manner. Policy frameworks such as these provide important advocacy tools for internal practitioners, whether in leadership or in structures such as the EqU. They provide not only clear guidelines for practice, but a clear mandate for anti-GBV work, which is important in advancing it in the face of resistant patriarchal institutional cultures.

Key areas from the Policy Framework to address GBV in the PSET system indicate that universities should consider including a comprehensive, overarching policy addressing GBV. Such a policy includes harassment and discrimination more broadly, staff grievance and disciplinary proceedings, as well as student and staff codes of conduct that are aligned with and integrated within the total policy environment of the institution with specific policies addressing different aspects of discrimination and inclusivity (such as race, sexual orientation and disability). HEIs should institute a charter on ethics that will be signed by all staff and student leadership in institutions. The charter should specify ethical conduct that pertains to the eradication of sexual harassment and GBV, and develop annual action plans for awareness (including how to report incidents) and prevention of GBV, and be submitted to the DHET. Institutions should undertake safety audits of campuses and residences to identify issues of concern highlighted by students and staff and take the necessary steps to address these. Universities should exercise control over third parties, such as visitors to the university. Moreover, universities should look beyond the immediate environment to engage in localised community-based initiatives and campaigns addressing GBV, given that staff and students experience GBV mostly off-campus. This may include becoming involved with the local community policing forum and/or other relevant structures. Institutions must ensure that background checks on GBV offences are done in all PSET institutions before the appointment of any council member, staff member or support personnel on campuses. Strong student peer education networks must be set up and maintained, and critically scrutinise initiation and residence practices and rituals to ensure they do not contribute to the normalisation and perpetuation of stereotypical notions around gender and sexuality. Universities should have clear drug and alcohol policies, and put measures in place to limit the extent to which lecturers can demand sex for marks, such as ensuring that papers are marked by multiple examiners or are subjected to moderation processes.

Senior HEI management must make a bold statement as a declaration of commitment to addressing GBV and creating an integrated framework to ensure a sustainable institutional approach. This includes the integration of anti-GBV efforts into core institutional planning and anti-GBV indicators in strategic management indicators. The integration of anti-GBV indicators into the “core business” of the university not only communicates a seriousness about implementation but provides the backbone for implementation measures. This includes the inclusion of anti-GBV indicators into the current SMI monitoring and
evaluation mechanisms (or development of more appropriate parallel mechanisms) and, potentially, a translation of these into a KPA for all management.

Marketing materials should carry anti-GBV messaging as a tagline in various communications throughout the institution. All environments must create anti-GBV steering committees, even if it is integrated into the existing transformation committees in each faculty or Professional Administrative Support Service (PASS) environments. Students must be represented on these structures. The effective functioning of these structures (including resourcing) in various environments should be included as a KPI for management of the environment. The EqU should be the central coordination point, providing direction and driving the Institutional Anti-GBV Strategy, reporting directly to a Vice-Rector or Rector. There must be a clear focus that is well-coordinated at an institutional level, giving direction to Anti-GBV steering committees, with direct monitoring by the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee.

Clear messaging from management and via marketing, the development of accountability mechanisms in the form of SMIs and a KPA for management, as well as the increased visibility of anti-GBV efforts in faculties and PASS environment through the work of the anti-GBV committees, should work towards building trust between the university's community, leading to higher rates of reporting. It should (in theory) also contribute to a discursive environment where gender violence is less likely to thrive. However, it is imperative that the newly implemented structure work as intended, as failure to do so will result in further distrust.

Anti-GBV committee members from the faculty and transformation committees should report progress made on initiatives every quarter to the EqU. Discussion of these reports must be led by the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee, to understand and provide further support and advice. The anti-GBV Monitoring Committee must have a balanced representation of students and staff at various levels. The methodology of status update reports to the anti-GBV Monitoring Committee should be based on the United Nations Women template on “10 essentials for addressing campus violence” (2016). The anti-GBV Monitoring Committee should be guided by the values and principles of human rights, and the ideals of social justice around equity, diversity and participation. Moreover, the survivor's needs (dignity, safety, rights, care and confidentiality) should be central in directing reactions to any incidences. Community needs (care and safety) should also be central in the reaction to any incidences and terms of development and education around competencies in this domain. Accountability to the stakeholders of SU and transparency and fairness of processes are also critical, to ensure that trust in these processes and structures is rebuilt.

The EqU should compile bi-annual reports for the Rectorate and it must serve at the meeting of the Rectorate and the anti-GBV Monitoring Committee. The report should serve at other key institutional structures including Institutional Transformation Committee and the Institutional Forum. The EqU would have the responsibility to communicate the decisions back to the anti-GBV Transformation Committees as well as the anti-GBV Monitoring Committee. Rectorate will determine how often to update Senate and Council on progress made with the institutional anti-GBV strategy. The Rectorate with the anti-GBV Monitoring Committee should evaluate work done annually and plan for the subsequent year. These
efforts further move anti-GBV work to the core business of the university, and into key institutional planning, implementation and reporting structures.

The EqU GBV coordinator should provide institutional coordination, working closely with all anti-GBV committees throughout SU and the different centres where co-curricular and other interventions are based. To empower students and staff to lead in the anti-GBV awareness and advocacy programme, student and staff anti-GBV ambassadors or allies should be selected, trained and mentored throughout the academic year. Importantly, this work should be resourced so that it can be rolled out at scale. This is the only way to address deeply rooted, problematic socio-cultural beliefs and behaviours (including excessive alcohol consumption) as well as educate staff and students in the basic concepts. This work should also be integrated into already existing training opportunities, for example in the Student Welcoming Programme and new academic orientation. If anti-GBV work is integrated into the SMIs of the university, this is more likely to happen.

Lessons Learnt and Implications for HEIs
Lessons from the officially reported GBV cases emphasise the importance of communication, regular updates and appropriate procedural feedback. Universities have an opportunity to eradicate GBV on campuses through education, awareness, advocacy and a clear code of conduct signed by all members of the community. Universities should pledge to remove barriers to gender equality, condemning sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination, and not be associated with practices that have a potential to lead to GBV.

All public universities in South Africa must contribute to the national call to action to end GBV, resourcing the appropriate mechanisms and integrating the National Framework on Anti-GBV, while following up on various context specific recommendations made to HEIs in the student-led anti-GBV movements since 2017. Being policy-and-legislation driven, genuine, evidence-and-experience-based and bold about comprehensive HEI anti-GBV strategies will go a long way to enhancing transformation at SA HEIs and stepping toward a future where staff and students are safe, supported and thriving in spaces of higher learning.

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