

SUPPORT

Survivors turned paralegals help victims of GBV for the greater good

MARSHA DEAN

Marsha.Dean@inl.co.za

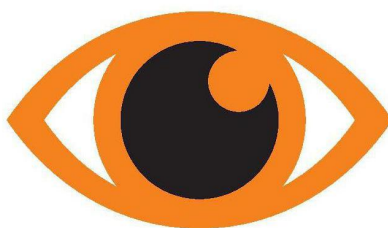
VICTIMS of gender based violence and femicide (GBVF) in impoverished communities in the Cape, can receive support from survivors who are now working as informal paralegals, through community-based organisation, The Great People of South Africa.

The paralegals help to ensure that legal processes are followed and that contact with authorities is less bruising for survivors who often experience further distress when interacting with the justice system.

The organisation operates in the Khayelitsha, Nyanga, Gugulethu, Delft, Kuilsriver and Cape Flats areas, all of which have been flagged among the national GBVF hotspots.

"The Great People of South Africa celebrates the great things we can do, despite the circumstances in which we find ourselves. By joining together, our members, 80% of whom are survivors of violence, abuse, and rape, can help others who often come to us before approaching the police or health authorities," said the organisation's founder, Zintle Khobeni.

"Often, we are called upon to help women who have moved here from the Eastern Cape and are victims of abuse. Many do not have ID documents or birth certificates for their children.



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"The lack of these documents means that they become virtual prisoners of their environment; unable to find jobs and access education, or the grants that could provide them with independence from their abusers and improve their lives, we work closely with the Department of Home Affairs in this regard," she said.

Khobeni, now a third year Law student at UNISA who survived two rape incidents in 2015, said the organisation offers counselling sessions as well as a self-defense programmes to equip women to fight back.

Since establishing the organisation in 2019, Khobeni said her reward was seeing perpetrators being brought to book through her organisation.

"We do mostly psycho-social support and do referrals to some organ-

isations that we work with, as well as group counselling sessions which involve the community like parents and children of the victim because GBV affects everyone directly and indirectly," she said.

The GBVF Response Fund has identified the organisation as one of the 110 high-impact non-profits across the country to receive a grant from its first tranche of R69 million to help fight South Africa's GBVF epidemic.

The Great People of South Africa will use this financial lifeline to benefit the women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and other vulnerable people in disadvantaged communities in the region.

"All too often, we hear that survivors of GBV do not report the crimes against them due to fear of secondary victimisation, or because they are unsure of how to navigate the justice system.

"Our communities, and our country as a whole, need more people like Zintle Khobeni, and her team of paralegals, to assist survivors through the difficult process of bringing the perpetrators to book, so that we can help put an end to GBVF in our lifetimes," said GBVF Response Fund chief executive Lindi Dlamini.

To contact the organisation, call: 079 409 3061 or visit their facebook page via: The Great People of South Africa.