

# SA pays high price for GBV

**REPORT:** SCOURGE COSTS COUNTRY'S GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT OVER R42BN ANNUALLY

➔ **More than 66% of women in shelters are unemployed.**

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**A**s the country officially kicks off its annual 16 days of activism for no violence against women and children today, research laid bare the high price of gender-based violence (GBV): it costs SA's gross domestic product (GDP) more than R42 billion every year.

SA has one of the highest rates of GBV in the world and, until now, its economic cost to society has been less documented: from healthcare, implementing GBV programmes, the costs of correctional services, absenteeism resulting from GBV and unemployment.

Audit, tax and advisory service KPMG's report, *Too Costly to Ignore – the Economic Impact of Gender-based Violence in SA*, aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding among policy makers, political leaders, NGOs, communities and families of the scale and magnitude of the potential costs of GBV to the country.

"A calculation of the national economic cost will serve as an important tool in our policy and advocacy efforts to end the suffering," the report noted.

"Using a conservative estimate, gender-based violence costs South Africa between R28.4 billion and R42.4 billion per year – or between 0.9% and 1.3% of GDP annually."

Based on work done with GBV victims in shelters, gender expert and GBV researcher Lisa Vetten said more than 66% of women in shelters were unemployed, with at least one out of six of those

## Shocking stats

- ▶ More than 13 000 women were victims of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm between July and September.
  - ▶ 1 277 women were victims of attempted murder and 989 women were murdered during this period.
  - ▶ Over 10 000 rape cases were opened with the Saps, in this time.
  - ▶ From a sample of 8 227 rape incidents that were perused, it was determined that 5 083 – 62% – occurred at the residence of the victims or perpetrators.
  - ▶ 1 651 of the rape incidents occurred in public places, such as streets, parks and beaches.
  - ▶ 69 people were raped at abandoned buildings.
- Police Minister Bheki Cele

women having completed their matric. Many drop out in Grade 9, with no experience, she said.

"Women who live in abusive homes, or even in shelters, value their jobs for their reasons, but

puter and sustainable farming," Powa's Thandiwe McCloy said.

Vetten said these initiatives needed support to ensure victims of GBV were empowered to get out of abusive situations.

A researcher at NGO Rhiza Babuyile, Katlego Assis, said community organisations were battling to keep up with the demand for GBV-related services, which also contributes to the list of costs to government and, subsequently, the economy.

"Women living in communities with high levels of violence struggle to find jobs or stay employed because commuting to work and back is not only unaffordable, but also poses a daily danger to their lives," she said.

"Some women leave jobs because of restraining orders against former partners, while others have left because of the toll GBV has taken on their mental health," Assis said.

"GBV is keeping scores of women economically inactive, meaning money, which could contribute to the GDP, not being made."

With November being National Disability Rights Awareness Month, the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) Response Fund highlighted the fact that many people living with disabilities were abused.

Many, if not most, are unable to defend themselves or speak out, said Tshepo Sefothelo, the fund's executive head of marketing and communication.

"The fund was alarmed at the lack of statistics and figures available – both globally and locally – to illustrate the extent of GBVF being perpetrated against persons living with disabilities.

"This paints a bleak picture of what we, at the fund, are calling the invisible pandemic."

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