



## Gender-Based Violence in Focus in DIMAMO

November 2024



On 15 October the University of Limpopo hosted a groundbreaking seminar on gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide, bringing together key stakeholders in the fight to address these pressing issues in South African communities.

The event was organised by the university's Research Development and Administration department and the Gender Desk, with support from the DIMAMO Population Health Research Centre. The seminar was underpinned by the theme "Tracking and Finding Solutions for Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in the Community,"

The purpose of the seminar was to share the preliminary findings of research conducted in collaboration with DIMAMO and to consolidate a list of relevant stakeholders for the implementation of a GBV reduction strategy informed by the findings. This collaborative effort highlighted the essential role of community engagement in research, particularly within the Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) framework.

The seminar was attended by approximately 250 people, representing a wide spectrum of the community. This included the DIMAMO community engagement team, the University of Limpopo's Gender-Based Desk, and leadership from the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) of Research and Innovation, Professor Mothiba. Also present were local tribal leaders from Ga-Dikgale, Ga-Mamabolo, and Ga-Mothiba, alongside traditional healers, the provincial Departments of Health and Social Development, representatives from the South African Police Service, the University of Limpopo Department of Public Health, non-profit-organisations and community members.

The presentation of the preliminary findings shed light on some deeply concerning trends in the local community regarding GBV. The study revealed that knowledge of what constitutes GBV was limited in the community and that violence against women was endemic. The drivers of GBV, such as beliefs around sexual entitlement and male dominance in romantic relationships, were consistent with existing knowledge of GBV across South Africa.

These findings were presented to the community through presentations, followed by open discussions where attendees could voice their concerns and suggestions. Community engagement in these discussions was robust.



One community member suggested that the University of Limpopo's Gender Desk should not only educate university students but also extend its workshops to young people in the community around it. Another member raised concerns about the Department of Social Development's lack of available social workers and psychologists during critical times, calling for 24/7 availability to assist GBV victims.

The study's Principal Investigator (PI), along with representatives from the University of Limpopo's Gender Desk and local government assured the community that efforts would be made to strategize and implement solutions that addressed these concerns, including exploring expanding the availability of social services and education on GBV at a community level.

The seminar was considered a success by DIMAMO and its partners. Not only were the research results well-received by the community, but the engagement also sparked meaningful dialogue on how the findings could inform direct action. DIMAMO's fieldworkers, who had been instrumental in gathering the data, were present and could see the impact of their hard work. Stakeholders, including local government and provincial departments, were also in attendance to hear firsthand the concerns and suggestions of the community.

One community member expressed their gratitude, saying, "We are happy that relevant studies are done in our community to address issues that we face as a community. We are also happy that the research findings are delivered back to us." This sentiment echoed throughout the hall, highlighting the importance of involving the community in research processes that directly affect their lives.

DIMAMO's commitment to supporting impactful research was clear, as the seminar served as a platform for academics to connect with the communities they serve. The outcomes of this collaboration between DIMAMO, the University of Limpopo, and various stakeholders have laid the groundwork for a more informed, responsive, and community-driven strategy to combat gender-based violence and femicide.