

Speak Up Against GenderBased Violence and Save Lives!

As a country we have experienced numerous incidents of GenderBased Violence (GBV) and femicide in recent weeks and months. The issue of GBV keeps rising no matter how many times it is frowned upon. Women still suffer at the hands of men, loved ones, strangers and family. This problem needs communities to come together and fight against the culture of making women punching bags. Men think women are objects, they think women should be all submissive and have no say or else they are regarded as disobedient.

Inzuzo Community Health and Social Care Projects is a local organisation based in Lawley (south of Johannesburg), that helps the community with home-based care and other health services. Services also include giving assistance around the social issues facing communities. Most of the people that work for the organisation are young women. Some have been unemployed for some time. As August is Women's Month the organisation decided to start an awareness campaign which started on Friday, 7 August 2020 with a protest action in Lawley. The campaign seeks to raise awareness in the community about the problems that women go through daily. The campaign hopes to break the silence.

“This is one a campaign to stand in power and strength against Gender Based Violence. The march was to commemorate Women's Month by tackling an issue that is still breaking down our communities and families. I have seen so many women who are willing to be in relationships where they are abused yet they go back because they do not have many options when they leave. The community has lost hope in the police and these women feel the same way,” said Summaya Mbewe, a young woman who is the campaign’s coordinator.

Not overlooking the pandemic, the people in the group wore their masks and carried hand sanitisers during the demonstration. They stood in formation, keeping social distance in unity to say “enough is enough”. Dressed in all-black they shouted; “you matter, you are not alone. Speak out and break the distress!” These people – from different generations and social backgrounds – came out to march through the streets of Lawley 2.

This campaign was the first of its kind in Lawley, one that reached out to the community with messages against GBV. The response from the society was mixed, some seemed to support the march but as usual there will always be men who do not support this kind of campaign. This is what we need in communities; daily reminders to stand up, not only when there is a victim or terrible incident but even if there is none. because it so widespread in our communities, we all know something and have seen something. Let us speak up and save a life.

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