



@emthonjeniwomen/ Emthonjeni Women's Forum



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BROWN BAG EVENT ON FIGHTING VAWG



Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF) hosted a Brown Bag event in Bulawayo supported by Diakonia, bringing together community structures and stakeholders from across Bulawayo and the Matabeleland region to share successes and lessons in preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG).

A key issue that emerged was the stigma faced by single mothers who leave abusive relationships. *"Women who come out of abusive relationships with kids and return to their maternal homes often face stigma and judgment. Instead of receiving support, you are seen as a woman who failed in her marriage,"* shared Ms Buhle Dube from Umzingwane District. Participants noted that this societal backlash often traps women in harmful environments.

The forum also explored how technology, climate change displacement, and disability intersect with GBV, with organisations highlighting challenges and innovative responses. Ms Monitor Ncube of Nkomwa Foundation Trust raised concern over unreported GBV cases among people with disabilities, often linked to dependence on caregivers who are as well the perpetrators in most cases.

EWF Executive Director Mrs Matambo spoke on the organisations approach of prevention and response. *"This event brings together stakeholders to share and exchange information on our successes, challenges, and gaps in the work of VAWG prevention and response,"* she said.

The event concluded with a solidarity pledge, as stakeholders committed to strengthening efforts to end GBV. BPRA Gender Officer Ms Abigail Siziba reminded participants: *"GBV is not a private tragedy; it's a public crisis. Every girl has the right to walk to school without fear, and every community has a responsibility to protect its most vulnerable."*

EWF ADVANCES ON WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY WITH FARM WORKERS



With support from FOS, Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF) facilitated a workplace gender equality sessions engaging over 90 farm workers 27 men and 63 women from Corncob, Hamara, and Arda. The safe, participatory dialogue created space for workers to raise workplace and social concerns, strengthening awareness of rights and grievance mechanisms.

Key outcomes included the identification of gaps in communication on leave benefits, NSSA deductions, and payslips, as well as recognition of the need for gender-balanced representation in leadership. Workers also reflected on how social issues within farm compounds negatively affect morale and relationships.

An action plan was agreed: National Employment Council will train the Workers' Committee on rights, grievance handling, and gender sensitivity; EWF will support the Committee in engaging management to ensure provision of payslips by September; and management will facilitate the fair selection of a female representative to strengthen gender-sensitive leadership.

At Hamara Farm, the Safe Spaces Monitoring Session revealed progress in workplace accountability. Workers reported a decline in GBV cases due to awareness efforts and policy enforcement, improved communication on wage delays, and peer-led initiatives such as supervisor Tawanda's proactive induction of new staff on gender equality and anti-harassment. To sustain progress, workers committed to scaling up peer inductions, standardizing grievance procedures, introducing anonymous reporting boxes, and recognizing gender champions like Tawanda to build a culture of respect and accountability.

GBV SYMPOSIUM TO BRIDGE ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF) convened a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Symposium under the theme "Bridging Action and Accountability: Strengthening GBV Prevention and Response." The event provided a platform to discuss emerging issues in GBV prevention, validate research findings on the digital divide, and strengthen coordination among stakeholders.

One of the important discussions centred on the vulnerabilities of women and girls with disabilities. "*Myths suggesting that intimacy with a woman who has a disability has benefits continue to expose them to abuse,*" noted Ms Sukoluhle Mhlanga of Zimbabwe Women with Disabilities in Development (ZWIDE). She highlighted how women with psychosocial disabilities and those relying on public assistance often face heightened risks of exploitation and violence.

The symposium also validated findings from EWF's comparative study on the digital divide in GBV prevention across urban Bulawayo and Rural Zimbabwe. The research revealed that while digital tools such as WhatsApp and SMS have potential to expand access to support survivors, barriers like high data costs, weak infrastructure, and low digital literacy prevent many women especially in rural areas from fully benefiting.

The symposium concluded with a strong call for inclusive, survivor-centred strategies both digital and in-person to ensure no woman or girl is left behind in the fight against GBV.



Highlights of the Month

