



#16DaysOfDiscontent

Day 16: The overall picture

The 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women were first introduced into South Africa by women's organisations in 1993, with government taking up the Campaign in 1997. In 2015 our big question is *what has changed?*

We answered this question from a range of vantage points both to illustrate the multi-faceted nature of responses needed to comprehensively address the problem of violence against women, as well as to show that there is no one solution that will magically address the problem overnight. In 16 days we could also not exhaust all dimensions of violence against women and so the Campaign will continue in the new year, using a range of different formats.

We conclude, for the moment, by presenting an overall summary of the 16 Days of Discontent. While some good work is being done, most implementation of programmes, laws and policies is below average and marked by delays. As a result the potential effectiveness of interventions is undermined and violence enabled. Insufficient attention is also being paid to those who experience multiple forms of discrimination such as women and children with disabilities.

7/10

National and Western Cape offices of the South African Police Service (SAPS)

responsible for domestic violence for putting measures in place to make visible non-compliance with the Domestic Violence Act, and instituting disciplinary action against members who failed to enforce the Act, or who were themselves engaging in domestic violence.

National Treasury on the basis of consistent efforts over the last three years to research funding to non-profit organisations and develop policy frameworks to improve their financial stability.

6/10

The Department of Justice and Correctional Services for taking steps to improve the services available at sexual offences courts, as well as for making sensible amendments to the Sexual Offences Act so that it no longer criminalises consensual sex between 12 to 15 year-olds and ensures that adults having sex with this age group continue being prosecuted for rape.

5/10

The health sector, including the Department of Health, the South African Forensic Nursing Association and the South African Nursing Council, scored no better than average for the quality of services provided to victims of sexual violence. They've done nothing terrible – but they've also done nothing to impress, in addition to allowing some of their policies to lapse. The efforts of the South African Forensic Nursing Association to have their speciality recognised ultimately prevents the health sector from being below average.

4/10

SAPS scored four out of 10 overall for their approach to collecting statistics on sexual offences. They were awarded a zero for refusing to recognise the under-reporting of sexual offences and persisting in a policy to reduce reporting further. This point has been made repeatedly since 2004. They scored a 5/10 for launching the *Policies aimed at reducing barriers to reporting, and the management of serial crimes*. Strangely, the full versions of these policies have not been made public, despite two written requests to the Minister asking for these documents.

The Department of Basic Education and the South African Council for Educators also scored a four for their lack of consistent, coordinated disciplinary action against educators who sexually abuse the learners in their care.

The Department of Social Development for their consistent under-funding of services to rape services, as well as the unreliability and tardiness of that funding. The funding by the corporate sector to violence against women services could not be measured and needs to be made visible.

The National Prosecuting Authority secured convictions for approximately 10% of sexual offences reported in the last two years. Shockingly, in at least one court in the country the conviction rate for sexual offences is less than 1%.

3/10

Access to justice for women and children with disabilities has been paid lip service for years while seeing no real attempts to accommodate their needs within the criminal justice system. This year did see a few new measures being introduced to improve their situation.

SAPS provincial divisions outside of the Western Cape do not appear to cooperate with the national office's attempts to improve the policing of domestic violence, while their responses to sexual offences are uneven. There are hard-working committed members of the police but many still do not provide an acceptable standard of service to rape survivors.

2/10

National coordinating structures, strategies and plans to address violence against women. Three years and at least R8.4 million has produced but one report and a programme of action which is still to be consulted around and launched. Some other activities planned in this regard may still bear fruit in 2016 however.

The South African Law Reform Commission for taking 13 years to finalise a Bill establishing how adult sex work is to be regulated in South Africa. The current legal framework of criminalisation leaves sex workers vulnerable to violence from the police, clients, brothel owners and pimps.

0/10

The Department of Home Affairs and parliament for failing to finalise the Domestic Partnerships Bill. After the Civil Union Act was promulgated in 2006 the chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs undertook to table the Domestic Partnership Bill in 2007. However, the only provided a revised version of the Bill in 2008 and nothing has happened since. The precarious economic circumstances of women who cohabit are still firmly in place 18 years after the law reform process was initiated.

Join the conversation!

Share your feedback with the Shukumisa Campaign.

Call the Shukumisa Coordinator on 082 546 4261

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The Shukumisa Campaign consists of 48 member organisations and four individual members across South Africa who work towards combatting sexual violence. The coalition is a mixture of community-based service organisations, research institutions and legal services and our members work with adults, children, people with disabilities, sex workers and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community.