



# STOP

## Abuse of women

### The Minerals Council South Africa's response to gender-based violence and harassment

Abuse of women in South Africa and in mining is not a 'women in mining' imperative. It is an industry imperative and a national imperative. But, we know that there are specific circumstances in the mining industry that mean that the abuse of women is a very real threat.

The Minerals Council is deeply concerned by the crisis of gender-based violence and harassment that pervades our society, and in particular, the mining industry. Women are the bedrock of mining communities and while the industry is transforming and women play

an increasing role in our workforce, they continue to face a range of challenges, of which safety and security, are of significant concern.

The Minerals Council supports President Cyril Ramaphosa's initiative to combat gender-based violence and harassment and proposed amendments to acts, including the Domestic Violence Act, to better protect victims of abuse. We also support the work of the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) which includes "Best Practice Guidelines" to enhance safety and security of women in mining.

**"It is an industry imperative and a national imperative."**

# WOMEN IN MINING

Mining has traditionally been, and largely remains, a male-dominated profession. Over the last 15 years there has been a concerted effort to increase the participation of women in the industry and the number of women working in mining has increased considerably – from roughly 11,400 in 2002 to 56,691 in 2019. Progress has been made to the extent that women now comprise 12% of the industry’s entire labour force. The Minerals Council

South Africa’s stance on this issue is highlighted in the newly-released ‘Women in Mining White Paper’.

However, the increase in female participation has not necessarily translated to a significant improvement in the behaviour and attitude towards female miners. In fact, abuse, harassment and intimidation by male colleagues remains a challenge that many women confront on a daily basis, at work as well as at home.



## Safety

Women underground fear the risk of sexual harassment and sexual violence, directed at them by their male colleagues and illegal miners. Underground conditions mean that women are often especially vulnerable.



## Physical limitations

Physiologically, women face challenges that men do not, making working on a mine a challenge. Working conditions can also make work more physically demanding than is safe.



## Equipment

Equipment – whether overalls, personal protective equipment (PPE), boots or tools – has been designed and manufactured with men in mind.

A MINERALS COUNCIL



# CALL TO ACTION

South Africa has amongst the highest rates of gender-based violence and harassment in the world. To put it into perspective:

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**10% increase**  
in sexual assault offenses\*

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**One woman**  
murdered every three hours\*

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**84 cases**  
of rape reported every day\*

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**Five times**  
higher rate of femicide than global average

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*\*2018/2019 statistic*

Because acts of gender-based violence and harassment are rarely reported, the extent of the problem is barely understood. Moreover, there is a lack of common understanding amongst both men and women of what is not acceptable behaviour. Abuse ranges from violence to coercion to physical and verbal harassment.

The Minerals Council South Africa is launching the “Stop Abuse of Women” initiative to focus on and address the abuse of women at work and at home.

As part of this rolling initiative, we are calling for the industry, our members, our employees, communities and fellow South Africans to put an end to abuse of women. It is our responsibility and mission to ensure that women are treated equally, fairly and with dignity and respect. We are committed to working with government and other social partners to address this urgent issue and strongly encourage collaboration between members, government and other stakeholders to ensure a gender equal society.

# INDUSTRY CALL TO ACTION

The situation requires a concerted intervention by members and a ten-step response is proposed:

**1**

Commit to making their workplace safer for women, free from violence, intimidation and harassment

**2**

Involve women in developing policies that make them feel safe

**3**

Train men and women to understand what behaviour is not acceptable

**4**

Tell men they will be called out on their poor behaviour and face penalties including suspension, job loss or criminal prosecution

**5**

Empower women not to accept abuse and harassment, and to provide a trustworthy mechanism for reporting incidents and supporting reporters

**6**

Commit to acting swiftly and sensitively in resolving reported incidents

**7**

Reward behaviour that contributes to a safer working environment for women

**8**

Build issues of violence/harassment against women into company risk management

**9**

Adapt infrastructure and how work is carried out to make the environment safer for women

**10**

Report honestly on the state of women's safety just as they do on safety and health

## Looking forward

In the medium term, the Minerals Council aims to establish a reporting hotline, with appropriate supporting mechanisms, as well as to engage companies on proactive and reactive responses to gender-based violence and harassment in the mining industry.

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