

Only 1 of 5 rapists arrested (The Patriot, 29 July 2019)

By Staff Reporter

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) on Wednesday hosted a public discussion in an effort to develop a strategy on how to create a culture of zero tolerance of any form of sexual violence within the campus community. During the same event, the university provided an adequate platform to enable the #MeTooNamibia movement to thrive.

With its main aim described as the opening of a dialogue among members of the public, members of the University community hope that this will allow the public to understand the scope of the work needed to address this matter.

The dialogue was split into two parts, one which was exclusively attended by women and another panel with an all-male audience and panel. For the ladies Yolande Engelbrecht of the Legal Assistance Centre appeared who spoke on legal views when it comes to rape.

Gender Equality Expert Ngamane Karuaihe-Upi was part of the panel discussion that catered to the group of men.

Engelbrecht clarified the definition of rape as “the intentional commission of a sexual act under coercive circumstances.

Coercive circumstances can include physical force or threats.

In Namibia it is one of the most commonly reported abuse.”

Further topics discussed included sexual harassment, which is the unwarranted sexual behaviour towards an employee by the employer or a co-worker.

According to Engelbrecht, Namibia has over 1100 reported cases of rape and attempted rape (2006 LAC research) 42% of these crimes are committed by acquaintances, 21% intimate partners & family members and 12% represents strangers.

LAC research further points out that in 2006, 7% of rape victims are men and boys. Most rape cases are reported on the day that it occurred, alternatively the following day, although there is no statute of limitations in terms of the law. Rape can be reported any time after it has happened.

Due to the practice of withdrawing rape charges, on average only 1 out of every 5 perpetrators alleged to have committed rape are arrested, tried and found guilty of a crime.

Karuaihe-Upi spoke about vulnerability of boyhood and manhood.

The gender expert made the argument that societal rules and the expectations of the roles men should fulfill, force men into a behavioural box, that when they act in any way other than what is seen to be ‘normal’ by societal standards, they are ridiculed or made to feel undue pressure.

“The fallacy that men are macho, men are strong, men are invincible, men cannot be broken is a lie. Men are emotional, men are vulnerable, men gullible, men are unsure. If you take the time to understand and know how men are conditioned, it is not an apology, it is a reality. Our societies, our cultures, our traditions are geared towards men seeing themselves as responsible.”

Karuaihe stresses that it is the responsibility of society at large to teach men different behaviours like “how to be humane, how to be kind, generous, gentle, honest, accountable, responsible, loyal” and to create spaces where men are allowed to be vulnerable.

After the #MeToo hashtag blew up on social media in October last year, it opened the floodgates on a previously taboo topic and provided a platform for hundreds of thousands of people across the world to share their experiences of sexual harassment and rape and Namibia was no exception.

Sentences for rape is 5,10 or 15 years for first time offenders. Repeat offenders can get sentenced to up to 45 years’ imprisonment.

If the offender has intentionally infected victims with HIV, the sentence will be most severe.

According to the organisers, the separate engagements were necessary to provide each group a platform to express themselves freely.

At a later stage, a joint engagement will be organised. and at a later stage hold a joint engagement.