**Mayor calls for a fight against abuse**

**By Neville Ndlala & Vutivi Makhubele**

The Mayor of Greater Tzaneen Municipality Maripe Mangena urged men to take a stand against women and child abuse during an anti-gender violence held in Tzaneen on 2 June in Tzaneen. Mangena alongside with Municipal Speaker Councillor Dikeledi Mmetle led the march from the civic centre through the streets of the CBD.

The two leaders were joined by municipal employees, councillors and ordinary residents as well as members of various community structures such as the Men’s forum, GTM Youth Council, ward committees, labour unions, FAMSA, Tzaneen LGBT community, ANC women’s league, and the business fraternity.

Councillor Cassius Machimana, the head of special programmes in the municipality and chairperson for the Men’s Forum said that the killing of Karabo Mokoena, Courtney Pierters and River Steenkamp in the hands of people they trusted was evidence that domestic violence affected everyone. He said statistics show that a woman is killed every six hours in the country. He said as men they are saying that the carnage has to come to a stop. Machimana called on men to take a lead in the protection of women’s rights.

Eric Mabunda, a peer educator at FAMSA who is gay said that they joined the march to highlight the plight of the Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) community. He said there was still hate crime against LGBTs in Tzaneen. He said it was hard for them to live freely in society because there is intolerance against gays and lesbians.

Jamaica Letsoalo also gay said that they wanted to land a hand in the fight against violence on women. He said that he is a victim of hate crime “I’m a victim of hate crime, I was gay-bashed by four guys and I’m partially impaired”.

The march was aimed at shinning a spotlight on women and child abuse. “This initiative is meant to educate men about abuse and to show that not all men are abusers and those are men who fight to stop the abuse of women. Participants in the march carried placards some reading “Children deserve to be happy, healthy and safe” and “Marriage is about love not gender”

In a memorandum handed over to the South African Police Services (SAPS), the marchers pleaded with the SAPS to prioritise cases of abuse, they also called on the NPA to call for longer sentences to abusers.

It was also mentioned in the memorandum that Street Committees, Community Policing Forums and Community Safety Forums should be active and assist in fighting crimes in communities.

In wrapping up the march, the mayor said “We have had enough of abuse and we cannot tolerate it any longer than we have”. Mangena said “As long as there are more people in the community than offenders, we can fight them and defeat them if we unite against crime.”