

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM  
FOR NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

25 NOVEMBER 2019

LEPHALALE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO

Programme Director,  
Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Youth and Persons with Disability, Ms  
Maite Nkoana-Mashabane,  
Deputy Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Youth and Persons with  
Disabilities, Prof Hlengiwe Mkhize,  
Other Ministers present,  
Premier of Limpopo, Mr Stan Mathabatha,  
Kgosi Sefunelo ka Seleka,  
Mayor of Lephalale Municipality, Councillor Jack Maeko,  
Members of the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning, Dumelang,

Thank you for allowing me to with you here today in Lephalale as we launch 16 Days of  
Activism for No Violence against Women and Children.

This crisis of violence against women and children is a great shame on our nation.

It goes against our African values and everything we stand for as a people.

We grew up being taught that as men and boys we must respect women and protect  
children.

We were taught to never, ever raise your hand against a woman.

But we have lost our way.

Our communities are in the grip of violence against those we are supposed to protect.

As I stand before you, I invoke the memories of the many women and girls in this province  
and throughout the country who have suffered from the brutality of men.

We remember 6-year-old Boitumelo Matsekoleng from Serageng village who we buried last  
month: her young life cut short by a man who raped her and left her for dead.

We remember 11-year-old Thandi Mampane from Ga-Marishane village who went missing  
from her home in September and whose body was found a week later.

We remember 59-year-old Mama Mphephu Sophie Vukeya, a grandmother from Muswana village, who was attacked while collecting firewood and who died in hospital in June after being raped and beaten.

We remember 2-year-old Samson Sithole from Seraheng village, who was kidnapped, raped and murdered in December last year, and his tiny body thrown into the bush.

These cowardly criminals have absolutely no regard for the sanctity of human life.

They do not discriminate.

The young are attacked, as are the elderly.

Boys are raped and abused, as well as girls.

They impose their toxic masculinity on those who are gay, straight, transgender or bisexual.

We are here today to unite under the theme: "Enough is Enough."

Because we have truly had enough.

We have heard the calls by our communities, including the people of Lephalale, for government to do more to end gender-based violence.

Two months ago, we announced an Emergency Action Plan that has seen R1.6 billion of government funding reprioritised towards programmes to tackle gender-based violence.

It focuses on improving access to justice for survivors, prevention campaigns to change attitudes and behaviour, measures to strengthen the criminal justice system, and the creation of economic opportunities for women who are vulnerable to abuse.

Since the plan was rolled out, I have been receiving regular weekly updates on our progress.

Key aspects of the plan are being implemented and we are on schedule to meet the six month target.

In September, a new Sexual Offences Court was opened right here in Limpopo in Sibasa and eleven regional courts across all provinces have been identified for upgrade.

New CCTV systems that allow survivors to testify in privacy have been upgraded at 38 regional courts.

The Thuthuzela Care Centres are being expanded, with three new centres planned.

Of the four in Limpopo, only two are fully operational, and we will be working with the NPA to ensure they are all capacitated.

An audit of the country's 281 designated health facilities is underway to prepare some to adopt the Thuthuzela model.

Provinces are identifying underutilised buildings that can be refurbished and used as shelters.

Four properties in Pretoria have already been refurbished and will open as shelters in the first week of December.

A 100-day rapid results approach to speed up case turnaround times was launched in the Eastern Cape last Friday.

It will be piloted at a number of courts with significant backlogs in the North West, Eastern Cape and here in Limpopo.

We are also working to reduce the gender-based violence case backlogs at forensic laboratories and are developing a tracking mechanism that will be rolled out in January next year.

National and provincial 24-hour call centres to deal with complaints against SAPS and legal officers in matters of gender-based violence are up and running, and we have achieved our target of attending to all complaints within seven days.

A project to reopen unresolved murder and sexual offences cases has already begun in the Eastern Cape and will soon be operational nationally.

The SAPS has allocated 312 new recruits currently undergoing basic training to the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units.

Nearly 4,500 SAPS members have also received training on the provision of survivor-centered services.

To date 7,000 rape evidence collection kits have been distributed to police stations countrywide and Limpopo received 700 kits in the first week of this month.

I encourage members of the public to contact the GBV command centre to alert us to stations that do not have them.

Many communities, including the Lephalale community, have told us about personnel shortages at health care facilities.

We are working to address this problem, and the Department of Health is currently conducting an audit of forensic health nurses in Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

Government employees who work with children and mentally disabled persons are being vetted against the National Register of Sex Offenders.

To date, over 1,200 officials have been vetted, including prosecutors and members of the SAPS.

To ensure that those found guilty of gender-based violence receive punishment proportionate to the seriousness of their crimes, we are in the process of reforming existing laws around bail and sentencing.

At the root of gender-based violence are sexist and patriarchal attitudes.

The national campaign that we are launching here today is aimed at raising awareness around the rights of women and girls, but also at changing the attitudes of men and boys.

Far too many men and boys believe women are inferior, that they are the property of their husbands and fathers, and worse yet, that women and girls 'deserve' to be raped because of how they dress, the places they visit, and the friends they keep.

This campaign will complement a wider 365-day, year-round education, awareness and prevention campaign that government will roll out in partnership with civil society.

I will say it again – violence against women is not a problem of women, it is a problem of men.

Our message to those who abuse women has been abundantly clear: there is no place in our society for you.

It is to the good and decent men and boys out there, who would not even dream of hurting, disrespecting or abusing a woman that I direct my message today.

Across this country, there are millions of good husbands and fathers who protect their families and treat their boy and girl children equally.

Who respect their mothers and the elderly women of our communities.

Who are fair bosses who do not discriminate against their female employees.

Who value their female classmates and fellow students.

I call upon you today to join the movement to break the cycle of violence.

It is you who must be positive role models to your sons, and mentor and guide them in their journey to adulthood.

Play your part in raising awareness around the rights of women to your colleagues and your friends.

When you know that your friends or colleagues abuse their wives and girlfriends do not keep quiet in the interests of keeping the peace.

Fellow South Africans,

The success we have registered so far in implementing the Emergency Action Plan is the fruit of collaboration between government, civil society and the private sector.

It demonstrates what we can do if we work together.

We know that gender-based violence affects and impacts us all.

None of us can be impartial or indifferent.

Let us remember the words of German playwright Bertolt Brecht:

“Those who stay at home when the battle begins and leave others to fight for a cause must be aware: because those who did not share the fight will share the defeat.”

We will not be defeated by this scourge. We will turn the tide.

Let us move together, a nation resolute and above all united, to end gender-based violence and femicide forever.

I thank you.