



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Keynote Address by Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, at the Seminar on Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Violence in the Workplace**

**August 30 2021**

Programme Director

Deputy Minister

Director-General

MEC's present

Provincial HOD's present

Leaders of Trade Unions

All Senior Managers of the Department

General Secretary of the ELRC, Ms Nolisindiso Foca

CEO of SACE, Ms Ella Mokgalane

Esteemed Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

Programme Director; as a woman, leader and mother, the gut-wrenching testimonies of gender-based violence survivors leave me boiling with anger.

It is an intergenerational pain or a curse that we carry on our shoulders as parents, mothers and women leaders.

The emotional burden of gender-based violence, femicide and sexual harassment in the workplace is carried by women of all races, classes and nationalities.

This scourge of crimes exclusively committed against the female body doesn't discriminate based on class, race, religion or nationality.

It is so pervasive, just like its siblings: patriarchy and toxic masculinities.

Today we converge to speak on behalf of those women and girl children who have been silenced forever.

We speak on behalf of the University of Fort Hare student, Nosiselo Mtebeni, 23, who was killed and dismembered by her boy killer, not her boyfriend, last week.

But we have seen this nasty recurring nightmare before.

Just two years ago, the University of Cape Town student Uyinene Mrwetyana was raped and murdered in a post office in Claremont in Cape Town by a male stranger, not a friend.

We lament the brutal killing of Tshegofatso Pule a year ago.

She was eight months pregnant when she was murdered, and her body hung from a tree on June 5, 2020.

Her unborn daughter perished with her.

Today we must speak for her and others who no longer have the voice.

Every family has a Tshegofatso Pule to tell.

Every neighbourhood has a Uyinene Mrwetyana story to remember.

Every man has heard of a Nosicelo Mtebeni story before.

Yet, most men look the other way.

Basically, we are fatigued by the wanton rape and relentless killing of women at the hands of men.

But as a gender activist as well as a public representative, I have a moral and constitutional obligation to never tire in helping society to come to terms with the shame, hurt and tears of women and children.

Programme Director; we must understand the gravity of gender based-violence as a second epidemic to battle the Covid-19 pandemic.

For instance, during the earlier stages of the Covid-19 national lockdown, the police service reported a sudden spike in gender-based violence.

The Government's GBV and Femicide Command Centre, a call centre to support victims of GBV, recorded more than 120,000 victims in the first three weeks of the lockdown last year.

Just weeks later, here in Pretoria, a similar call centre received up to 1,000 calls a day from women and children confined to abusive homes seeking urgent help.

Prior to the pandemic, femicide in South Africa was already five times higher than the global average.

The female interpersonal violence death rate was the fourth-highest out of the 183 countries listed by the World Health Organisation.

In simple language, at least six women are killed by men in this country every day, according to Africa Check.

According to the Medical Research Council's report, the murder rate was three women per day in 2014.

More than half of the murders (57.1%) were by an intimate partner (Africa Check, 2017).

Roughly South Africa records 220 000 applications for Protection Orders a year.

Of those finalised, 25% result in breaches of the order (Watson, 2012).

One in every three young people – had experienced some form of sexual abuse or exposure at some point in their lives by their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, according to the Gender, Health & Justice Research Unit of the University of Cape Town.

This empirical fact prompted a young 18-year-old activist, Tari Nyamayaro, to pen a poem titled: Auditioning for my Funeral.

I woke up today and realised I was 18 years old. Like the sun came, and I realised that I have existed on this earth for about 6,570 days.

See, being a woman in this country, my life expectancy has been significantly shortened, and I realise that by the time I'm 19, I'll

probably be dead or on the way to dying, so I thought it would be important to prepare for my funeral, to audition for the role of corpse.....

I urge you to read the rest of the poem in the new book, ***A Time Like No Other***, published by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologian SA.

As we know, today the number of violations against women bodies keep rising, and so it is the extent of depravity.

As Government, we are seized with this matter, including crafting the new amendments to strengthen the gender-based related legislations to better protect survivors and victims.

Last year President Cyril Ramaphosa announced far-reaching changes to the gender-based violence laws in our country.

He announced that three key Bills have been introduced to Parliament as part of the Government's promise to GBV activists and women.

The three amendment Bills are designed to fill the gaps that allow some perpetrators of these crimes to evade justice and give full effect to the rights of our country's women and children.

The first Bill, to amend the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, will create a new offence of sexual intimidation.

It also extends the scope of incest and widens the reporting duty of those who suspect sexual offences committed against children.

It takes the mantra; if you see something, say something to make it mandatory.

With the amendment, the National Register for Sex Offenders will include information on all sex offenders and not just the particulars of those convicted of sex crimes committed against children or persons with mental disabilities.

Offenders will also remain on the Register for a more extended period, and the Register will be publicly available.

The Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Bill will intensify the granting of bail to perpetrators of GBV and femicide.

The Bill will also expand the offences for which minimum sentences must be imposed.

President Ramaphosa acknowledged that: "People are angry that many perpetrators of such serious crimes are exploiting legal loopholes to avoid imprisonment and are frustrated that sentencing is often not proportionate to the crimes."

He said the amendments impose new obligations on law-enforcement officials and on our courts.

Under the new Bill, prosecutors must place their reasons on the record for not opposing bail in GBV cases.

Unless exceptional circumstances are provided, those accused of GBV are to be detained by the court until criminal proceedings are over.

The sad reality is that many survivors of gender-based violence have lost faith in the criminal justice system.

Today, I urge society to stand up and report these gender-related crimes to the authorities.

Each of us must not ignore the signs.

If you see something, say something.

However, this country needs a new value system that puts respect for women's dignity and sanctity of life above everything else.

A new man must emerge on the ruins of the heightened GBV incidents that occurred during the Covid- 19 lockdown and persists to this day.

The new man must never raise his hand and voice against any woman or girl child.



He must never lower his pants in front of his children.

Unfortunately, no piece of legislative amendments will give us this new society we seek to build.

It is truly in our hands as GBV activists, victims, perpetrators and survivors.

We must seek partnership with men with positive masculinities.

Furthermore, we must not underestimate the power of disclosure and storytelling as a form of healing for the victims of gender-based violence.

If you're abused and/or living in fear, tell someone.

Do not ignore the signs.

Do not die in silence.

Do not die in shame.

Healing begins the minute you declare that enough is enough: my life matters.

My happiness matters!

My safety is a priority!

Let's not die in silence.

Our bodies aren't a crime scene.

We are also playing our part in Basic Education in the national effort to stem the tide of gender-based violence against women and children.

In this regard, our education officials are being orientated around the country on the new *National Strategic Plan for Gender-based Violence and Femicide* launched by the President recently.

As an education sector, we have our Protocol and strategies in place to deal with the incidents of gender-based violence.

There's a handbook for learners on how to prevent sexual abuse in public schools, titled *Speak Out - Youth Report Sexual Abuse*.

Our longstanding Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools was workshopped anew around the country recently.

We have also adopted the UNICEF inspired INSPIRE Indicator Guidance and Results Framework, which is a set of evidence-based strategies for preventing and responding to violence against children.

We are also part of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

Therefore, we are committed to making sure that all our young people learn under such nurturing school environments - so that - they too can become active citizens of a thriving nation at peace with itself.

We have adequate sexual harassment and anti-gender-based violence in the workplace policies in place for our employees.

Today I urge our male counterparts to join us in stemming the tide of gender-based violence.

Our Human Resource Unit promotes gender-based violence awareness every week by encouraging staff members to wear black in honour of the victims who have been silenced forever.

I thank you.