



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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## **JOSIE MPAMA LECTURE WEBINAR**

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR  
DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY**

**PROF. HLENGIWE MKHIZE**

**DATE: 12 JANUARY 2021**

**16:00-18:00**

**Online Webinar via Zoom**

**V3**

**THEME:**

**CHANGING KEY BEHAVIOURS THAT SUSTAIN GBV**

(How to change such behaviours, and the challenges of dealing with the psychological health of a nation in relation to GBV)

Programme Director

Cde Nomarashiya Caluza

Officials and guests

Programme Director

Ladies and Gentlemen

Firstly, I would like to thank the organizers for this series of gender equality discussions under the banner of a powerful and accomplished woman Josie Mpama, who dedicated her life to the realization of a democratic free and non-racial South Africa. She fought for the rights of women and the rights of workers. She was highly critical of toxic patriarchal attitudes and overt male utterances which nullified women and actually hindered them from participating in politics. Robert Edgar who wrote of her said she is a symbol for women globally to *Get Up and Get Moving*.

Secondly, the clarion call was made by our President Cyril Ramaphosa when he launched the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on gender-based violence and femicide that the problem of GBVF is not a woman's problem but a man's problem as well as the problem of society at large. The thrust of the NSP is that GBVF is a manifestation of men's failure to realize women's rights as human rights, as protected in the Constitution of the Republic of SA. So this initiative resonates well with the key pillars of the

NSP, especially Pillar Two which amongst others directs us to focus on Prevention and promotion of social cohesion.

Pillar 2 sets out to turn the tide of GBVF in the country by focusing on eliminating the social acceptance of all forms of violence against women, children and LGBTQIA+ persons through the development and implementation of long-term, comprehensive, adaptable, context specific and holistic approaches to prevention that targets all living in South Africa. It gives effect to Articles 16 to 18 of the Presidential Summit Declaration against GBVF. Effective prevention means addressing the range of risk factors, including structural factors that drive GBVF and contribute towards the normalization of violence.

The prevention pillar of the NSP on GBVF sets out to leverage different platforms and approaches to transform attitudes and behaviours and enable healing from individual and collective trauma arising from violence. Prevention by its nature is a medium-to-long term process that requires sufficient resources invested in various interventions in order to make an impact NSP on GBVF.

As the Department of Women Youth and Persons with Disabilities, we must look at multi-layered forms of abuse and violence. We are all aware of abuse suffered by women and children, however, it becomes more complex when you look at the abuses faces by youth, or by persons with

disabilities. A young woman in South Africa is more likely to experience violence than she is to experience the inside of a university. A young black woman faces multi-sectoral forms of discrimination, stereotyping, abuse and violence every day, through the situation she finds herself in, and the opportunities provided to her by society and the state. Expanding on this idea, a person with a disability faces discrimination abuse and all forms of violence meted out on their psyche since their birth.

While we have policy positions on the above through the National Youth Policy, approved by Cabinet late last year), or the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or specific policies like the Policy Framework to address Gender-Based Violence in the Post-School Education and Training System, or even our country's commitment to international conventions like International Labour Organisation Convention 190 which looks at Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, we still face the mammoth task of changing attitudes on equality.

I often ask myself this question, and I will ask it here: What would South Africa and indeed the world look like if men and women experienced the same levels of rape and sexual violence? It is a dark thought, so forgive me, but the question behind this scenario is "How would we be dealing with this pandemic differently?" Would we have societal wide response like we did to apartheid or racism? How do we interpret our apathy and

light hand in dealing with perpetrators with abuse and in this scenario, in the eyes of the victim, is the state the secondary perpetrator, party to allowing the crime to continue to assault the psyche of the victim?

Furthermore, with the entire world caught in the unrelenting grip of COVID-19 the effects of abuse on women, youth and persons with disabilities must still be understood. Levels of isolation which have left victims trapped with their abusers, as well as the impact our slowed economy is having on the desperation by youth and persons with disabilities to secure income streams is yet to be measured. COVID-19 has not only taken thousands of lives, but it will continue to have a long lasting effect on equality in this country.

In a post COVID-19 world, women will have to work 10 times harder to secure employment, and will be exploited by male employers who understand the scarcity of work, especially at entry level. Those already in employment are gearing themselves psychologically to endure even higher levels of abuse to retain their jobs. Youth lacking sufficient experience and persons with disabilities who may be disadvantaged through unprepared work environments will face bigger hurdles to secure employment. COVID-19 had done a lot more damage than just claim the lives of thousands of our fellow South Africans. It has made the playing field an even more conducive environment for the abuser.

As I have stated above, our prevention programmes should be evidence-based, and shift away from toxic masculinities' to addresses the restoration of human dignity, builds caring communities and responses to historic and collective trauma.

President Ramaphosa's commitment it ending gender-based violence is unwavering. As the outgoing chair of the African Union, later this month, the President will host a Inter-Continental Men's Summit on Violence Against Women and Girls to look at this pandemic on the continent, as a global problem that requires responsible and accountable leadership in its response.

### **The Three Behaviours that Enable Gender Based Violence:**

The extent of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) in South Africa has reached crisis proportions. The country's rate of femicide is reported to be amongst the highest globally with some reports suggesting this rate to be almost 5 times the global average. The realisation of a prosperous and vibrant democracy is deeply compromised by violence directed at women, children, and gender non-conforming persons. This onslaught is part of a wider culture of violence and intolerance that manifests in homes, workplaces, places of worship, places of learning,

social spaces, and neighbourhoods, regardless of the class, race or geographic location of perpetrators or survivors or victims.

Its incidences leave the people of SA devastated with no words to name and explain what they have witnessed. The attackers are brutal and cruel not only sexually assaulting their victims but sometimes burning them and burying them in shallow graves. The latest incident of burying of victims occurred just this past weekend in Giyani where a 32-year old man was arrested for killing his wife and then burying her body in a shallow grave dug inside their shack in Nwazekudzeku Village.

The brutality of crimes against women and children leaves long-term scars on family members, friends, and communities. Breaking down of distrust leads to movements like #MenAreTrash which tear into the social fabric which communities are built on – Trust and compassion for each other.

Programme Director, we thank the organizers for making the GBV pandemic to be part of the launch of the Joe Slovo White Ribbon Campaign and also of the Party Centenary. The White Ribbon Campaign is the global Movement of men, women and boys working to end violence and abuse against women and girls and to promote gender equity, healthier relationships and an improved vision of what masculinity is. Here in South Africa, the Joe Slovo Foundation has embraced and is championing the White Ribbon Campaign to end GBV, through primary

prevention programmes, involving Trade Unions, workplaces, educational institutions at all levels, sports clubs and community based structures.

Programme Director, Comrades,

The identification of any three behaviours that enable GBV is not the simplification of such a complex multifaceted crime but an attempt to unpack critical aspects of the crime being fully cognisant of the fact that there might be other factors which are equally important or even more urgent.

Firstly, we have to change social norms which are a fertile ground for toxic masculinity, discrimination against women, girls and the LGQIA+ community and generalized and systematic undermining of women's rights as human rights. Beliefs, actions, values and attitudes emanating from established social norms permeates through all segments of society. They affect women in the village, in big corporates, in politics, in educational institutions and women in the religious sector. We have to unite women at all times so as ensure that they don't lose gains by allowing the great divides like urban, rural, educational status, political affiliations to divide women and weaken their struggles. Within the White Ribbon Campaign it is important to name such social norms, through joint

programs multi satorially, deconstruct and construct new norms which will promote generation equality .

Secondly, the broader societal campaign against GBV should tackle practices within broader societal structures which undermine the family as an institution for socialization, transfer of healthy generational values and teachings. In SA we have family generations which have no experience of love care and trust from both a father figure as well as the mother figure. It is almost impossible to transfer the virtue you never enjoyed to the other. In most instances in an unequal society, all segments of society including the work place have to be restructured in such a way that it contributes towards the restoration of the role of the family like working hours that take into consideration child care, in equal pay for equal work, tolerating the ceiling for women 's advancement within organizations. Through our education system boys should be empowered to question toxic masculinity, male domination and unfair and unjust privileges for men as against efforts to cushion the family as an institution.

Thirdly, structural poverty and unemployment are big feeders to gender based violence and femicide. Living under extremely difficult circumstances in impoverished rural communities, or informal settlements, or townships or suburbs and lack of access to the economy

become a breeding ground for deep feelings of anger, hatred and resentment. As much as the problem of gender-based violence manifests its ugly face amongst all segments of society, the poor and the rich, poverty and unemployment are major contributors which require urgent attention so as to reduce the scourge and create a conducive environment for safety and security for all.

The long term psychological effects of gender-based violence is women and girls who live a life of fear. We have a society in which half of the population is gripped by fear, unable to enjoy freedoms without being judged, harassed, abused, or killed. Without interventions the long-term effects on the psyche of South African women will be a society in which men are distrusted more and more, and a rift develops in which men and women have a trust deficit that impacts on the way society engages and interacts, and how children are raised.

Developing effective interventions to transform norms through a range of prevention interventions, including parenting programmes, educational interventions and skills development programmes in sustained ways is critical. Consequently, strengthening the delivery capacity in South Africa to roll out effective prevention programmes, whilst building the capacity of individuals and institutions to implement prevention interventions, is critical.

To heal the rift that exists and to build a society on trust requires both tipping the scales to support victims of abuse, and to be viable in the long-term, a generation of men who hold equality and respect above all other values. The policies listed above are developed to mask the fact that we are a deeply unequal society and as long as this inequality serves a purpose, our appetite for change will be absent.

**Thank you**