

## **Fight against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide intensified**

Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) remains a critical threat to the society's safety in Mpumalanga. President Cyril Ramaphosa has declared GBVF as the country's second pandemic.

Crime monitoring trends show that the Province has recorded a slight decrease in the reduction of GBVF incidences. Despite this, the Provincial Government is escalating measures to prevent a relapse. According to statistics for the July and September 2024/25 period, Mpumalanga accounted for a 6.3% sexual offences cases. This depicts a 0.3% decrease from the previous quarter between April and June 2024/25.

In a historic move, the Premier, Mr Mandla Ndlovu has established an integrated approach of bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, including government representatives, civil society organizations, activists, survivors, traditional leaders to tackle the pandemic vigorously. He says the establishment of the Provincial Council on GBVF, is a significant move to renew and unite efforts to eliminate the GBVF victims. "This council will provide the platform and leadership needed to implement policies, drive change and hold our selves accountable to the survivors and their families who depend on us for justice and support," he asserted.

The council's formation is the latest move by the Provincial Government to eliminate the GBVF. Last year a Provincial GBVF strategy was approved to tackle all forms of violence and abuse against women and children. The strategy is aligned to the President's four key pieces of legislation, namely the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007, the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act, the Domestic violence Amendment Act and the National Council on Gender Based Violence and Femicide Act.

According to OTP's Director for Special programmes, Ms Nandi Shongwe, the Provincial Government is putting effective measures to intensify GBVF measures. "As Mpumalanga Provincial Government, we are pleased to have also managed to establish rapid response teams (RRT) in 20 municipalities. These task teams are made up of members in the community, civil society, private sector, local government, and traditional leaders that will take an integrated approach to swiftly respond to issues of GBVF," she stressed.

Traditional Leaders have expressed commitment to support the measures. "As amakhosi, we commit to support and collaborate with all integrated government programmes that support the end GBVF. We have evolved our cultural practices to fit with the changing society. We have moved away from the past traditional gender roles. We now teach young boys to treat women with respect, and equality," Kgoshi Lameck Mokoena, the Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, emphasized.

A similar sentiment was reiterated by the Co-Chairperson of the Council, Ms Nomalanga Ngwenya. "We are dedicated to eliminating the cycle of violence by creating a safer and more inclusive province for all. The council will work hard in transforming the societal gender stereotypes, breaking down harmful masculinity through education and awareness campaigns," she explained.

A pledge was signed in Secunda as a commitment by all stakeholders to fight GBVF.