



public works  
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## **Joint Media Statement by Minister Patricia de Lille and Minister Lindiwe Zulu**

### **Gender-based violence requires all government departments and citizens to work together to combat this scourge**

In August, during the debate on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) in the National Assembly, Minister Patricia de Lille said that our women and children are under attack and South Africa is bleeding.

Sadly, a few months later we have lost more women and children due to violence perpetrated by men and the list of victims is growing by the day. We condemn the brutal and senseless recent killing of the 7-year old of Tazne Van Wyk from Elsie's River, 12-year-old Sibusiso Dakuse from Hout Bay and the 7-year old Reagan Gertse from Tulbagh.

These statistics are horrific, with Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal experiencing unacceptably high levels of crimes against women and children. They shock us all as a nation – but instead of turning away in horror or discomfort, we must act **NOW** and act decisively to root out this scourge.

We are taking decisive action now to expand victim empowerment services to parts of the country where currently none exists to meet the immediate safety and protection needs of women and children escaping GBV and family violence.

One of the reasons that women and children remain in endless cycle of abuse is that they often have nowhere to go or they are not financially secure enough to leave an abusive relationship. Pain is not normal and women must walk away from abuse as this could literally save their lives and their children's lives.

In December, Minister De Lille and Minister Zulu announced the first four properties in Pretoria which the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) handed over to the Department of Social Development (DSD) for use as shelters. Social Development is in the process of operationalising the centres to become places of hope where survivors of GBV can rebuild their lives.

This approach forms part of our government's service response that is underpinned and guided by the President's Emergency Response Plan (Five-Point Plan) and Khawuleza District Model.

We are confronting the scourge of Gender Based Violence and Femicide head on.

Today, Minister de Lille announced that an additional 6 properties are being made available in the Western Cape and two properties in Gauteng to be used as safe havens for women and children who are victims of abuse.

The six properties in the Western Cape are in the following districts: Garden Route, West Coast, Central Karoo, while the two Gauteng properties are in the City of Johannesburg metro region.

These properties which are being cleaned and refurbished, are to be used as shelters the coming weeks and more properties in all provinces are being identified to be handed over for use as shelters for GBV victims in the coming months. The handover of these facilities to the Department of Social Development will go a long way to help us to better coordinate and strengthen of ongoing national efforts to respond effectively and timeously to the scourge of GBV and Femicide.

In the Western Cape for example, DPWI officials are currently assessing properties within the City of Cape Town, Drakenstein, Overberg and in the Cape Winelands district municipalities.

To ensure the safety and protection of survivors of GBV who are fleeing from abusive relationships and family violence, the exact locations of these properties will not be revealed. The services to be rendered at the centres will include psychosocial support, healthcare and legal services amongst others. They will be open and accessible 24 hours, seven days a week.

Beyond these interventions by Government, it is also time that we go back to the values of "my child is your child" and keep a close watch over children in our neighbourhoods and communities when they are walking to the shops or playing. We sadly live in a world where we cannot take anything for granted and where trust is not something that can be freely given. We have to remain vigilant at all times to ensure the protection of women and children.

In addition to the ongoing national efforts to combat the scourge of GBVF, Minister de Lille is pleased to report that DPWI has deployed the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to all districts across the country to do GBV advocacy, awareness and provide support to survivors and communities in any possible way.

To date, DPWI has recruited a total of 319 EPWP workers (254 participants in 19 District Municipalities and 65 participants in 5 Metros). The participants have been contracted by 37 NPOs across the country who have provided the EPWP workers with victim empowerment training before deployment to ensure they are better equipped to

help survivors of GBVF. Some of the activities include conducting GBVF community dialogues, counselling services to survivors and their families, referrals for professional work services, health services or to police.

Minister Zulu said that she pleased by Minister de Lille's commitment to work jointly with the Department of Social Development to identify other facilities that can be utilised by provincial departments and civil society organisations in other provinces to render victim empowerment services throughout the country.

"We have committed to work with speed to ensure that these centres become operational before the end of the coming financial year, in recognition of the seriousness and urgency of the need to address GBV and Femicide. We are investing in expanding victim empowerment services across South Africa", added Minister Zulu.

Minister de Lille also made a commitment that DPWI would use government buildings to install GBV prevention and awareness messages and so far one billboard was installed in Pretoria near the Kgosi Mampuru prison.

Processes are underway to install a GBV artwork in Cape Town and a programme to roll out a campaign across the country is being finalised so that the GBV campaign and messages will be in the faces of these monsters who perpetrate these sick crimes against our women and children.

These are the contributions of DPWI to the fight against the scourge of Gender-based violence and femicide but we need all partners on board to do anything they can because if we sit back and do nothing and just talk, history will judge us harshly.

ENDS

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