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**REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND
INFRASTRUCTURE SIHLE ZIKALALA DURING THE LAUNCH OF A GBV FACILITY
AND RAPID RESPONSE TEAM AT SAPS WENTWORTH, 06 AUGUST 2026**

Programme Director,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A WORD OF APPRECIATION

The scourge of Gender-Violence and femicide is a stain on our hard-won freedom and democracy.

It is a scourge that can be ended by all stakeholders working together.

And today's unveiling of this GBV facility here at Wentworth is a practical step of what collaboration between individuals, communities, civil society and government can achieve when they work together.

On behalf of our government, we wish to applaud and pay a special tribute to Mr. Ahmed Osman and the organization, Human AID SA, for donating this building structure to the SAPS in Wentworth to be utilized in counselling and caring for victims of GBV.

Instead of lamenting a scourge that is deeply embedded in all our communities, we applaud this initiative which is aimed at supporting the victims of this crime.

This will go far in assisting SAPS efforts and government initiatives broadly which are geared towards healing and supporting women and children who have been subjected to this degrading, traumatic crime.

Mr. Osman and his organization are challenging all of us to lend a helping hand in the fight against GBV.

Like them, let us respond positively to the call that was made by President JF Kennedy in the USA in his inaugural address on 20 January 1961 where he said, “***Ask not what your country can do for you-ask what you can do for your country.***”

SA’S NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN ON GBVF

Compatriots, last year, in November 2025, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa classified GBVF as a national disaster.

The pronouncement led to country invoking Section 23 of the Disaster Management Act (Act no. 57 of 2002) to enable urgent and coordinated interventions across government.

This underlined the need for stronger leadership and implementation of a coordinated, whole-of-government response in line with the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide (GBVF) 2020-2030.

South Africa’s NSP on GBV is the country’s roadmap for addressing gender-based violence and femicide which focuses on creating a safe, violence-free environment.

The NSP is anchored on six pillars:

1. Accountability
2. Prevention
3. Justice
4. Response
5. Economic Empowerment
6. Research.

To succeed, the emphasis is definitely on bold leadership, multi-sectoral coordination, and survivor-centred support.

The NSP calls on all stakeholders to work together to drive social change, tackle harmful norms and ensure that survivors have access to the necessary resources for healing.

It is an action-plan to transform our beautiful country into a place where women, children and the LGBTQI community can thrive, fulfil their dreams, and be freed from violence.

In line with the pillar on Justice, Safety and Protection, we call on all actors in the criminal justice system to contribute to ensuring that GBV survivors access efficient and sensitive criminal justice that is quick, accessible, responsive and gender inclusive.

The pillar on Response, Care, Support and Healing requires that care and support services by government and civil society are victim-centred and survivor-focused to facilitate recovery and healing.

Instead of judging victims or blaming them, we are called on to be compassionate and dedicated in supporting GBV victims.

Let us end the secondary victimization of GBV victims.

We can do this by changing patriarchal, sexist social attitudes and supporting civil society organisations that facilitate rapid and sensitive responses to survivors.

We also appeal to the police to treat all gender-based crimes reported by men and women on an equal basis and to refrain from ridiculing men who suffer abuse and violence at home as this discourages men from reporting GBV cases.

Let us say no to toxic masculinity.

DPWI FIGHTING AGAINST GBV & EMPOWERING WOMEN

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) has a critical role to play in supporting the national response through its mandate on public infrastructure provisioning, maintenance, and social empowerment programmes.

The Gender Unit within the DPWI participates in various national coordinating structures, including National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structures (NATJOINTS), and other interdepartmental committees, to ensure that the DPWI's programs contribute meaningfully to the national GBVF response strategy.

Through these structures, several strategic interventions have been identified where DPWI can play a catalytic role.

Working hand in hand with the Department of Social Development, DPWI supports the handover of facilities for utilization as GBVF shelters, centres of healing, and skills development.

The DPWI Gender Unit is presently reviewing its programs to respond to the GBV disaster classification by COGTA.

The Department is determined to continue contributing to the successful implementation of the national Disaster GBVF response through its mandate on public infrastructure provisioning, maintenance, and social empowerment programs.

Among others, DPWI interventions include:

- Provision and support of infrastructure for the GBVF National Command/Call Centre at Salvokop, which serves as a national coordination point for GBVF response and victim support services.
- Collaboration with the Department of Social Development and relevant NGO's on the identification, refurbishment, and provisioning of safe shelters; and support facilities for survivors across all nine (9) provinces, with particular attention to:
 - (i) Supporting underserved rural and high-risk communities – no less than 11 properties will be handed.
 - (ii) Render Facilities for skills development and empowerment initiatives for survivors of GBVF, including centres for transitional or halfway houses facilities, aimed at training and promoting economic independence and reintegration into society.
 - (iii) Creation of Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) opportunities to support GBVF community-based and other initiatives that promote infrastructure protection, social awareness campaigns, and livelihood opportunities for vulnerable groups.
 - (iv) GBVF messaging through Government Buildings Wraps Advertising
 - (v) Facilitate the rollout of targeted skills development programmes through

VIOLENT HOMES BREED VIOLENT CHILDREN

Ladies and Gentlemen, let us build strong, caring families that are free from violence.

Research reveals that many children who come from broken families become a liability to communities if no immediate action is taken to ease the situation.

Research undertaken by the United Nations Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls has shown that: ***“Children, both girls and boys, who have witnessed or suffered from gender-based violence, are more likely to become victims and abusers later in life. For example, surveys done in various countries revealed that boys who witnessed their father using violence against their mother were three times more likely to use violence against their partners later in life.”***

We recall the words of the late and former United Nations Secretary-General who said violence against women is an impediment to peace, progress and prosperity: ***“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is***

perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace”

WOMEN EXPERIENCE GBV EVERYWHERE

It is difficult to police GBV. Often, GBV occurs behind closed doors and in cultures where reporting the crime is taboo or victims are shamed.

Women experience gender-based violence even from the workplace, from their colleagues and managers.

At the heart of GBV are patriarchal attitudes which affect even the most affluent societies in the West.

Working with all stakeholders, let us unite behind the Raising a Boy Child campaign to impart good moral values, positive masculinities, self-respect, and the skills that will enable boys and young men to make valuable choices, fight social ills, and be patriotic citizens that uphold human rights, the dignity of all while contributing to sustainable development.

Working together, we can build strong, successful children than repair broken men.

WOMEN’S MONTH THEME

Ladies and Gentlemen, today’s handover of this GBV facility takes place during a month dedicated to the women of our land.

In 2026, our country commemorates Women’s Month 2026 under the theme, **“Empowered Women Empower the Nation.”**

This year we also mark the 70th anniversary of the historic 1956 Women’s March where more than 20 000 women from all backgrounds and races marched to the seat of government in Pretoria against the imposition of passes on women.

Great leaders and nation builders have always recognized that women are the backbone of prosperous nations.

Today China leads in many avenues of human development because a leader like Chairman Mao Zedong understood that **“Women hold up half the sky”**.

Our freedom remains incomplete as long as women remain trapped in poverty, unemployment, inequality and feel unsafe in our country.

Let us recall the words of President Samora Machel who said, ***“the emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, a guarantee of its continuity and a precondition for its victory.”***

Similarly, it was OR Tambo who said in 1981:

“The mobilization of women is the task, not only of women alone, or of men alone, but of all of us, men and women alike, comrades in the struggle. The mobilization of the people into active resistance and struggle for liberation demands the energies of women no less than that of men.”

Since our 1994 democratic breakthrough and adoption of our Constitution in 1996, South Africa has been advancing policies that deliberately seek to empower women, restore their dignity, and uphold their human rights. We must not deviate from this noble agenda because gender-inequality drives violence against women.

Let us also recognise that if we succeed in accelerating the delivery of bulk infrastructure in water and sanitation, in building bridges and roads, constructing police station and courts, in supporting fishing communities rebuild their harbours, we will also be making an important contribution in the socio-economic emancipation of the women of our land, especially those in underserved, rural areas and townships like Wentworth, Umlazi, and Phoenix.

We will be playing our part in restoring the dignity of women and protecting them from violent crime.

Once again, congratulations to this community of Wentworth on receiving this crucial facility in the fight against GBV.

Malibongwe!

I thank you!