

Speech by Deputy Minister of Public Works Mr. Ntopile Kganyago during the launch of the 16 Days of Activism Against Women and Child Abuse.

Date: 25 November 2005

Venue: Leamogetswe, Atteridgeville

The Programme Director Mr. Thomas Makhubele

**Chairperson of the Board: Leamogetswe Home of Safety
Rev. Dan Thabethe**

**Ms Matlakala Ratsoma of The Leamogetswe Home of
Safety**

**Mr. Philemon Maphalala of the Pretoria Regional Office
of DPW**

**Pastor Dolo who blessed the ceremony with a prayer
Ladies and Gentlemen**

We are here today to be part of a significant campaign against the abuse of women and children in this country and the world. This campaign is called the 16 Days of Activism: No Violence Against Women and Children which runs from November 25 to December 10 annually.

It is perhaps a measure of the quality of our society and the courage of our conviction that we have stopped asking why such a campaign is necessary. This is for me an indication of the increased awareness we have created over the years in the war against the violence inflicted on women and children through this and other campaigns.

This growth in awareness further illustrates that as a nation, as a community and as individuals, we have taken the first and very necessary step towards our own redemption. That first step Ladies and Gentlemen is to recognize that there is a huge challenge in front of us but also to say that we will together in time triumph over it.

It is very important that we are here today. It is important because without halting the abuse against the women of Africa and our children, there is no future worth working for. Securing the safety and security of our children and women is the first step we must take when we wake up in the morning. It is also the last pledge we must make before we close our eyes at night.

We are here because we believe that eradicating this type of violence is not a matter that sustains itself in the periphery of our society. It is a matter that affects us in our homes and working places, it haunts us in our rural and urban areas, in poverty and prosperity.

We meet here today buoyed by the knowledge that we have behind us easily the best Constitution in the world. We say this boldly because among others our Constitution recognises gender equality as the cornerstone of South Africa's democracy. Our parliament has passed a battery of legislation - such as the Domestic Violence Act – which seeks to entrench the rights of women.

We also draw strength from the very fact that the campaign around the violence on women and children is

drawing solidarity from all the capitals of the world. As a UN campaign, International Day of No Violence Against Women is scheduled to start on November 25 2005 which is International Day of No Violence Against Women. The international campaign ends on 10 December 2005 which is International Human Rights Day. Under direction of the Presidency, in South Africa we run a parallel campaign over the same period. It not only highlights violence against women, but given our material conditions it wants to address the sickening scourge of children abuse as well.

The Department of Correctional Services, as the lead department, is working closely with the Office on the Status of Women in the Presidency (OSW), the Office on the Status of Disabled Persons (OSDP), the Office on the Status of Children (OSC) as well as other government departments.

In this regard we are here today to ensure that here in South Africa, here in Africa, here in this wide world, at least for the next 16 Days not a single child is abused, no woman is violated. The 16 days start today, but they must not end on December 10. They must extend to

every hour, every day and every month thereafter of our lives!

We commit ourselves to the following objectives.

- Generate, within the national community, greater awareness of the negative impact of violence on the development of women and children;**
- Popularise the white ribbon as a symbol of personal and organisational commitment to the eradication of violence against women and children**
- Stress the importance of partnerships between government and civil society in eradicating women and child abuse;**
- Involve men and boys as crucial role-players in the eradication of violence against women and children;**
- Encourage sectoral participation in the national Campaign by business, organised labour, faith-based organisations, traditional leaders and others in outreach programmes;**
- Provide victims and survivors of violence with information about legislative services and other mechanisms that have been set in place by**

- government to ameliorate the impact of violence on their lives;**
- To use the national Campaign to raise funds for NGOs and Cobs working with victims and survivors of violence.**

Over this period and beyond you will see thousands of people wearing the symbolic white ribbon as a sign of solidarity with the women and children of our country.

It is clear that this campaign depends largely on the collective push by all, from all sides. We will have achieved the aim of our campaign only if the men and boys of our community are able to join together with the girls. We will reach our objectives when the children and women of our country are able to collectively make the call for all of us to Act Against Abuse!

I must stress that this is not just a government campaign. It transcends the private and public sectors while being directed by government. Over the next few days therefore you will witness the flooding of both the electronic and print media by various activists in this campaign.

They will range from government ministers to senior government officials. They will no doubt include the Chief Executives, Managing Directors and Directors of listed and unlisted companies and their executives. All these patriots will use their time and money to join the growing national and international cadre in the movement against Women and Child Abuse.

We will collectively highlight the instances of abuse and their extent. This we will do not from a position of weakness and helplessness. We will do this with the strength of knowing that we are not alone. Our women and children are not alone.

We do this because we believe that the rights of women and children are fundamental human rights entrenched in and protected by the Constitution. They are thus inalienable from, integral to and indivisible from the human rights framework. Gender and age -based violence in all its different guises is incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated.

We will not win the war on violence against women and children overnight. The persistence of this pathology

tells me that we need more than the punitive aspects of dealing with this. Do not get me wrong, those who inflict violence against women and children deserve to rot in jail.

But I would add that a long term solution to this scourge will only be possible once we have reasoned with the boys and men who inflict this violence. We will reason with their attitudes while we reason with their consciences. We must at the same time dig deeper and ask the question. What are these socio-economic conditions in our country which breed these monsters? This, Ladies and Gentlemen will bring us closer to ridding ourselves permanently of this criminal behaviour.

As a sign of our own commitment DPW has adopted the Leamogetswe Safety Home. We are voluntarily offering our services and resources to upgrade the centre by painting the premises, paving the surroundings, repairing toilets and bathrooms as well as planting trees and grass. The renovations are estimated at R200 000 for the building and R100 000 for the grounds. In line with our Black Economic Empowerment policy we will

use local contractors in Atteridgeville during the construction.

Leamogetswe, which means “you are welcome”, makes a contribution to the community of Atteridgeville as a haven for abused, neglected and abandoned children. The home currently provides shelter to 49 children, some of whom were abandoned due to HIV and disabilities.

We have adopted the Leamokgetswe Safety Home in the hope that this will pave the way for other departments to get involved and offer their services to similar causes.

In conclusion I am today committing the DPW to ensuring that we will ensure there is no violence against women and children in our Department. We will ensure that every corner of our department including the regions creates ambassadors against this violence. These will help bring us closer to a country where our women and children are free of the constant fear of violence in their lives.

I thank you

