

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM FOR NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN KEY MESSAGES

BRIEF:

The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children Campaign is a United Nations campaign, which is held annually from 25 November (International Day for No Violence Against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day). Other key commemorative days observed annually during this 16-day period include World Aids Day on 1 December and the International Day for Persons with Disabilities on 3 December.

This year marks the 25th anniversary since South Africa initiated the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign. The 16 Days campaign focuses on raising awareness to the devastating impact that gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) has on women and children, and the social fabric of our society.

The campaign will be launched on 25 November 2023, in Mpumalanga Province, and the theme for the 16 Days of Activism Campaign for 2023 is: “Accelerating actions to end gender-based violence & femicide: leaving no one behind”. The sub-theme for this year is: “Safe access for women to clean water: a basic human right”.

The theme speaks to the importance of ensuring an all-society and multi-faceted approach to fight GBVF. The sub-theme seeks to address barriers women face in safely accessing water and sanitation in South Africa.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
<i>Our actions can make a difference.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Africa continues to grapple with high levels of GBVF despite concerted efforts by government, civil

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	<p>society, businesses, and the broader South African community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the 16 Days Campaign is to spearhead a concerted drive for social mobilisation, collaborative action and collective responsibility for ending gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF). • The campaign places a specific emphasis on targeted interventions, and practical steps towards the ultimate eradication of GBVF. • The campaign is a call to action to challenge attitudes and stereotypes that perpetuate gender-based violence and femicide. • The 16 Days campaign emphasises the importance of women’s economic empowerment and advancement in tackling GBVF. • The 16 Days campaign emphasises the need for a multitude of voices across government and society. • It builds on the work done through the National Strategic Plan and calls on everyone to work together to end GBVF. • The 16 Days campaign forms part of government’s comprehensive 365 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children.
<p><i>The economic empowerment of women and addressing their social needs is central to addressing GBVF.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to Amnesty International, South Africa ranks as the 30th most water-scarce nation globally, with one in three South Africans lacking access to safe and reliable drinking water. • During the 16 Days campaign we have an opportunity to explore the intersections of safe access to clean water and the broader issue of gender-based violence. • The right of women to access the human right of water is not only a moral imperative but also a tangible step towards ending violence against women and girls. • The scarcity of water in certain parts of our country disproportionately affects women, who often shoulder the responsibility of collecting and managing water for their households and communities. • The time and labour demands of water collection can limit women's engagement in income-generating activities, such as farming and small-scale businesses, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and hindering women's economic empowerment. • Women and girls often travel long distances daily to collect water, taking hours away from education, work, and family care. • It also exposes them to physical harm and sexual violence during these journeys. • Limited safe access to clean water and sanitation leads to waterborne diseases like cholera and diarrhoea, especially risky for pregnant women and children. • The time spent on water collection restricts women's involvement in income-generating activities like

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	<p>farming or small businesses. This perpetuates poverty cycles and hinders their economic empowerment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls often drop out of school due to water collection responsibilities, limiting their education and future job prospects.
<p><i>Partnerships are key in fighting GBVF.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 16 Days campaign aims to strengthen the social fabric of South Africa and fortify social cohesion so that GBVF is deemed unacceptable by society. • Government has teamed up with civil society to form a united front to fight GBVF. • Our collective actions are key to ending GBVF, and the partnerships we have formed are helping to create a safer South Africa for all. • GBVF is a societal problem and we need the help of everyone to resolve it. • Together we must challenge negative social norms and behaviours that perpetuate gender-based violence. • We call on men and boys, and all of society to take collective action to eradicate rape, sexual harassment and abuse. • We must have conversations on toxic masculinity, patriarchy, and misogyny, which are often the underlying causes of all forms of abuse and harassment of women and girls. • The culture of silence kills and allows for sexual harassment, abuse and patriarchal practices to continue unabated.
<p><i>Gender-based violence is receiving government's highest attention.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide has ensured a strategic and concerted effort in fighting GBVF. • Government has allocated dedicated funding over the medium term to drive implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, which seeks to put an end to the scourge. • A significant portion of these funds has been committed to advancing the empowerment of women through procurement, business support and access to economic opportunities. • Funds have also been directed to expanding support to survivors, strengthening the response of the criminal justice system and undertaking prevention programmes. • We continue to work in partnership with civil society to give effect to the pillars of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide. • The Presidency has taken the lead in ensuring that the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide is institutionalised across all organs of state.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government departments submit monthly reports to the Presidency outlining their respective achievements towards the targets set in the plan. • This has allowed government to closely track progress in the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide. • An Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) has also been established to coordinate the implementation thereof and reports regularly to Cabinet.
<p><i>Government is committed to fighting GBVF.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of April 2022, 116 regional courts were upgraded to Sexual Offences Courts. • A sexual offences court is defined as a regional court that deals exclusively with cases of sexual offences. • About 3 500 investigating officers received specialised training on Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual crimes. • At least 12 public buildings have been renovated and repurposed as shelters and police stations have been capacitated with sexual assault evidence kits. • We have increased the number of shelters and care centres for survivors and improved the capacity of our police to deal with crimes of gender-based violence.
<p><i>We are economically empowering women as part of our fight against GBVF.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The empowerment of women is an integral part of our effort to achieve inclusive growth, create jobs and expand economic opportunities for all. • By improving the economic circumstances of women, we are reducing their vulnerability to abuse and violence. • Social empowerment is fundamental to women achieving and fully enjoying their human rights. • Together we must fight patriarchal practices and negative social norms. • Economic empowerment is one of the most powerful routes for women to achieve their potential and advance their rights. • Women’s economic resilience will enable them to walk away from situations that make them vulnerable to GBVF, and to take control of their own lives and that of their children.
<p><i>GBVF is a serious scourge and we cannot remain silent any longer.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government calls on all South Africans to work together with police, prosecutors and courts to ensure that perpetrators of GBVF are brought to book. • Government believes that working together, we can end the culture of silence on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide and report perpetrators to the police. • We are encouraged by the quick arrests that are regularly being made while the courts have also taken a tough stance against perpetrators of GBVF. • Report suspected abuse to your nearest social worker or police station or call the toll-free Crime Stop number: 086 00 10111.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of violence are encouraged to use the 24-Hour Gender-Based Violence Command Centre hotline 0800 428 428 to report any abuse.
<p><i>Those who hurt the most vulnerable in society have no place to hide.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have introduced a number of new laws to better protect victims of domestic violence. • In 2022, President Cyril Ramaphosa signed into law three pieces of legislation to strengthen the criminal justice system, promote accountability across the state and support survivors. • The enacted new laws are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, Amendment Act 13 of 2022, ▪ The Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act 12 of 2022, and ▪ The Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2022. • The new laws enhance protection for victims of gender-based violence and crack down on perpetrators. • The needs of victims are at the forefront of any response by the criminal justice system. • The NPA and the SAPS now have more power to act decisively. • Convicted sex offenders must be registered on the National Register for Sex Offenders. • Protection orders may now be obtained online. • A peace officer can arrest a person at the scene of domestic violence without a warrant. • Bail will now be denied unless the court is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist for release on bail. • Bail may be cancelled where the accused has contravened a protection order; or poses a threat to the safety of the victim. • Victims of domestic violence will be allowed to participate in parole proceedings.