

**MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND  
LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE  
THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRE IN NGWELEZANA ON 03 AUGUST 2012.**

Programme Director Rev Mthethwa;  
Honourable Minister Jeff Radebe;  
Her Worship the District Mayor Cllr Thembeke Mchunu;  
Acting Deputy Director of NPA Adv Thoko Majokweni;  
Mission Director Mr Jeff Borns;  
Project Director Virginia Francis;  
Health Department Head Dr Sibongile Zungu;  
Deputy Director General of the DSD Ms Nomusa Mbanjwa;  
Acting NDPP Adv Nomgcobo Jiba;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Government and the all our citizens of KwaZulu-Natal, I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the National Prosecuting Authority for coming to this province to launch the Thuthuzela Care Centre as part of a national programme which seeks to increase the number of such centers throughout the country.

We are very much encouraged by this move to raise awareness about Gender-Based Violence as well as women and child abuse in our communities. It is only appropriate that this launch should take place on the month of August when South Africans celebrate Women's Month.

We know that South Africa is a democratic country, yet it is still characterized by inequalities which require redress and indeed all of us are in agreement that gender equity is an essential component of the reconstruction of the South African society.

We regard this as timely intervention that will go a long way in addressing what we have experienced in the past where our women, particularly the elders, and children become victims of rape, torture and many other forms of abuse.

I must say that it is very disturbing that in this day and age we can still have two old women in their 80's and 90's being raped within a space of two weeks in one village of Swayimane. Almost every day we read or listen to stories of our young girls who are being raped by old men.

Programme Director, the mission, vision and intention of this center is an integral part of the Department of Community Safety and Liaison. We know that the crimes that happen against the victims often take place within the same communities and sometimes within the family which is supposed to be a primary institution that protects, builds and nurtures its members.

As they say, "Happy families make a happy society, a happy society make a happy nation and happy nations make a happy world." We want to get to that ideal. There may still be a long way to go, but such initiatives which seek to take us to that ideal affirm our commitment and resolve to get there.

The time has come for us to no longer keep lamenting about our pitiable plight of a society that has crime victims. But we must be seen to be proactive in finding and implementing methods to rid our society of this cancer.

We know that many victims suffer in silence. We know that the victims of crime tend to develop thick skins and persevere even when they are aware that their lives are in danger. They become stuck in a situation from which they can and should run away from sooner than later. Yet, running away from difficult situations is not as easy. Some victims cannot run away because the perpetrator is a bread-winner and the victim is unable to take care of themselves if they are dependent women or children.

Some victims cannot get away because they are afraid of being called failures after failed marriages, especially the women victims. The way in which the women are treated by their families, relatives, the church and community after divorce is the very reason that makes them to stay in marriages that are not fulfilling and dangerous to them, and which ultimately lead to their untimely deaths.

Yet other victims are hiding the fact that they are victims because they do not want to expose the problems within their relationships or marriages, let alone telling the world that their spouses are abusive.

At times the parents, especially the mother of a raped child may not want the case to be opened or withdraws it because the perpetrator is the breadwinner. We need to protect such vulnerable children, even if it means removing the child to a place of safety, for the good of the child.

Victims need to understand the fact that it may be better to go hungry for a while whilst you are looking for an alternative income rather than fail to expose a perpetrator in the interest of the safety of children.

The bottom line is that men do not have a right to see women as punch bags, or sex objects. If a woman says no to sex men have to understand that she is saying a big and bold **NO**. Men have to start seeing women as people with integrity, people who are talented in various ways, who are capable of doing things that were once thought to be a preserve for men.

Our government is pulling all stops in ensuring that more women get employed within a given public structure or private company, including in high positions, which will undoubtedly liberate women from their tormentors.

In responding to this challenge, the Department of Community Safety and Liaison came up with a programme called “*Operation Khuz’umhlola*”. This programme is designed to educate our women, children, youth, disabled and the elderly on their rights to safety and protection. It is also intended to prevent would-be violators through educating them of the consequences and damages caused by their violent actions.

My Department has also partnered with the SAPS “Men for Change” project to reach out to men in the interest of conflict management within the family institution and the protection of vulnerable groups. Contact crimes are high and these crimes are mostly generated through inter-personal interaction at home. What is often forgotten is that the police can only attend to sensitive crimes of this nature once the crime has been reported.

The duty to prevent such crimes from being carried out lies with the community, the family and with the individual. The role of the police is to give the best support possible to the victim as the offender is brought to book. These crimes can only be reduced through our own individual and collective efforts.

With these words, Mhlonishwa Bhungane, as the province of KwaZulu-Natal, we say we are fully behind the implementation of the government’s resolve to provide such centers as Thuthuzela Care Center throughout the province and the country as a whole. Let us all come together to end violence, defend women and children and empower them with the necessary skills to achieve socio-economic independence so that they cease to be helpless victims of all forms of abuse.

I thank you all.