

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE
LAUNCH OF WOMEN'S MONTH AND GBVF PRAYER DAY, MOKOPANE,
WATERBERG DISTRICT

01 August 2025

Programme Director,

MEC for Transport and Community Safety, Ms Violet Mathye,

MEC for Sports, Arts and Culture, Mr Jerry Funani Maseko,

MEC for Treasury, Mr Kgabo Mahoi,

MEC for Health, Ms Dieketseng Mashego,

Executive Mayor of Waterberg District, Cllr Jack Maeko,

Mayor of Mogalakwena Municipality, Cllr Ngoako Saggie Taueatsoala,

SAPS Provincial Commissioner LT General Thembi Hadebe,

Provincial Commissioner for Gender Equality, Mr Tshepang Mokgokong,

Traditional and Religious Leaders,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Members of the Media,

Thobela, Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goie more,

A woman does not ask for the spotlight; she becomes the light. She is not defined by titles, but by her ability to turn adversity into purpose. In her, we see courage clothed in humility, and faith rooted in action. This is her story,

one of quiet revolutions and everyday triumphs, the kind that has built nations and continues to shape our future.

It is for this reason that August is no ordinary month. It is a time when we pause as a nation to honour the spirit, strength, and sacrifices of women, those who marched in 1956 demanding freedom, dignity, and equality; and those who continue today to build our communities with purpose and perseverance.

On this first day of August 2025, we gather in unity and reverence to launch Women's Month under the fitting theme: "Building Resilient Economies for All." We do so with solemnity and resolve, as we also observe this day as a Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) Prayer Day, calling upon our collective moral and spiritual consciousness to confront the scourge that continues to rob us of mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends.

As we launch this critical month, let us ground ourselves in gratitude and remembrance, for just a few days ago, we wrapped up Mandela Month, honouring a man who taught us about justice, reconciliation, and humanity. But even Madiba would have reminded us today that the struggle for freedom is incomplete without the total emancipation of women.

This is a time to celebrate women's achievements, raise awareness, mobilize support, and most importantly, commit to action.

As we commemorate Women's Month, we must take pride in the contributions of the women who have shaped our nation, not as footnotes in history, but as authors of our destiny.

Let us remember Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke, the first Black South African woman to graduate with a university degree and a pioneer of the African women's movement. Let us pay tribute to Ruth First, a fearless anti-apartheid activist and journalist who gave her life for truth and justice. We honour Lilian Ngoyi, who stood shoulder to shoulder with her male comrades as a political leader during the dark days of apartheid. And we sing the praises of Miriam Makeba, who used music to speak truth to power on the world stage.

Here in Limpopo, we have witnessed the rise of modern heroines, women excelling in the arts, business, academia, politics, and sports. Just recently, Kgothatso Montjane, born and raised in this province, made history on international tennis courts, becoming an emblem of resilience and excellence.

Let us continue to tell these stories, stories that inspire, empower, and awaken the next generation of women leaders.

While we celebrate, we must also confront a painful truth that South Africa, and Limpopo in particular, continues to be plagued by Gender-Based Violence and Femicide. It is a shameful crisis, one that demands our collective condemnation and decisive action.

As a government, we are not sitting idle. In December 2024, the Provincial Government convened a Social Crime Summit to intensify our response. We engaged communities, law enforcement, NGOs, and faith-based organisations to strengthen our fight against this pandemic.

We also recognize the disturbing trend that GBVF cases tend to spike during Women's Month. This must end. This must stop. We will not allow the month meant to honour women to be the month that endangers them.

We call upon law enforcement agencies to remain vigilant. And we urge our communities: if you know something, say something. Perpetrators live among us, in homes, churches, workplaces. We cannot be complicit through silence.

The struggle for gender equality goes beyond violence. It includes equal pay, equal opportunities, equal representation, and equal recognition.

Women in South Africa still earn less than their male counterparts, face workplace discrimination, and are often denied leadership roles. Mentorship remains scarce, especially for young women in rural areas.

This year's theme challenges us to build resilient economies that include and uplift women. We must support women-owned businesses, cooperatives, and stokvels. Women are natural entrepreneurs, all they need is access to finance, mentorship, and fair markets.

The Limpopo Provincial Government will be rolling out a comprehensive programme throughout this month, focusing on digital finance access for women, bridging the credit gap through "Her Economy Revival (HER)" initiatives, strengthening women-led enterprises, and GBVF education and community engagements.

This is not just a commemoration. It is an investment in the future.

As we empower women, we must also lift the girl child. Every successful woman today was once a girl who dared to dream. Let us ensure that our girls have safe schools, access to quality education, and strong female role models.

To women in leadership: let us reach back and mentor, sponsor, and guide. Let us open doors and break ceilings so that no girl ever has to ask for permission to lead.

Today, as we observe this GBVF Prayer Day, we bow our heads not only in grief but in determination. We pray for the souls of those lost. We pray for healing for the survivors. And we pray for courage — the courage to act.

Faith-based organisations must become safe havens, not silent observers. Our pulpits must echo messages of respect, equality, and zero tolerance to abuse.

As we launch this Women's Month, let this moment ignite a movement, not just for this month, but for every month to come.

Let us remember: we are standing on the shoulders of giants, women who faced tear gas and batons with nothing but courage and conviction. Let us not betray their legacy through inaction.

This Women's Month must be more than ribbons and slogans. Let it be a time of reckoning. Let it be a time of rebirth.

Let us walk together, pray together, and work together, for a province and a country where every woman and girl can live in dignity, safety, and full expression of her potential.

I thank you.