

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE
PROVINCIAL LAUNCH OF THE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND
FEMICIDE CAMPAIGN AT VULEDZANI BULALA SPORT CENTRE,
THOHOYANDOU, THULAMELA SUB-REGION

21 November 2025

Programme Director,

Provincial Executive Committee led by the Provincial Secretary, Cde
Musanda Reuben Madadzhe,

Provincial ANCWL,

Provincial ANCYL,

The Veterans League,

Vhembe Region Executive Committee led by Cde Tshitereke Matibe,

Alliance Partners,

Traditional Leadership,

Faith-Based Organisations,

Civil Society Groups,

Business Community,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Thobela, Good Morning, Goeie Môre.

Today, we gather as a people shaped by the timeless spirit of Ubuntu, a spirit handed to us by our forebears, who taught us respect, empathy, and deep reverence for human life. They taught us that to be human is to see oneself in the life of another.

Yet, each day we are confronted with headlines soaked in pain, stories of brutality and cruelty that contradict who we are and what our humanity stands for. It is as though a dark shadow has crept into our homes, dimming the bright flame of Ubuntu that once defined our communities.

The scourge of gender-based violence and femicide has become a violent storm tearing at the very soul of our nation. It shatters families, steals futures, and bruises the collective spirit of our people. This crisis echoes the cries of wounded mothers, broken daughters, silenced sisters, and traumatised children. It is not a distant problem. It lives among us. And it demands our united courage, our uncompromising voices, and our urgent action to restore dignity, safety, and humanity in our communities.

Programme Director, gender-based violence is an epidemic deeply rooted in unequal power relations, harmful gender norms, and entrenched patriarchy. Femicide, which is the intentional killing of a woman or girl because of her gender, is the most extreme and horrific expression of this violence.

National statistics paint a grim picture: recent data estimates that at least 15 women are murdered every day in South Africa, a figure that highlights a severe and ongoing national crisis. This means a woman is killed approximately every three hours. For many women, the greatest danger is not on the streets, but inside their own homes, spaces meant to be sanctuaries, yet too often turned into warzones.

Programme Director, the consequences of GBV and femicide extend far beyond visible injuries. Survivors carry long-term physical scars and deep psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Children exposed to domestic violence face higher risks of behavioral challenges, poor academic performance, and the likelihood of becoming victims or

perpetrators later in life. The economic impact is equally severe, lost workdays, income, opportunities, further deepening inequality and poverty.

Allow me now to reflect on what the statistics tell us about the state of gender-based violence in our province.

Domestic violence has risen sharply across our province when comparing April–October 2024 to the same period in 2025. We recorded 690 more cases, a 16% increase, with every district contributing to the rise.

Vhembe leads with a disturbing 30% increase,

followed by Capricorn at 22%,

Mopani at 15%,

and more moderate yet still concerning increases in Sekhukhune and Waterberg at 6% each.

This province-wide surge suggests a combination of heightened social pressures, improving reporting mechanisms, and persistent underlying causes, all demanding strengthened prevention strategies and enhanced support systems.

When examining crime types, the picture becomes even more alarming:

Common Assault increased by 281 cases (16%),

Assault GBH by 112 cases (9%),

Rape by 86 cases (38%).

Even more troubling is the sharp rise in murder, which increased by 49%, albeit from a smaller base. Attempted Murder and Arson were the only categories showing a slight decline of 7% each.

Programme Director, these figures illustrate a distressing rise in violent and sexual offences occurring within domestic settings with spikes in rape, murder, and assault being especially concerning.

A deeper gender and age analysis shows that women remain overwhelmingly affected.

Women accounted for 3,718 victims, an increase of 596 cases,

While men accounted for 1,159 victims, the number increased by 94 cases.

The vulnerability of children is heartbreaking.

Among minors aged 0–17, 148 rape cases were recorded, nearly matching the 157 cases among adult women. For children, the most common offences were rape, common assault, and assault GBH.

These statistics are not just numbers. They represent human beings whose lives have been violated. They represent daughters and sons who will carry lifelong scars. They represent the urgency of our mission.

Programme Director, as the Provincial Government, we are working closely with SAPS and the Justice Ministry to combat this scourge. But we must be honest with ourselves: government alone cannot defeat GBVF. It requires a united, society-wide movement.

To end gender-based violence and femicide, we must confront the root causes: patriarchy, misogyny, toxic masculinity, and social norms that normalise violence. Prevention must be at the heart of our strategy. This requires a collective effort from government, communities, traditional leaders, the private sector, civil society, and individuals.

We must raise generations that understand gender equality from an early age.

We must strengthen the legal system and ensure perpetrators are held accountable.

We must build strong support networks for survivors including accessible medical care, trauma counselling, safe shelters, and legal assistance.

Programme Director, ending GBVF must become a societal imperative. It is not work for a single institution or gender. It is the responsibility of every one of us.

We must challenge harmful jokes, stereotypes, and behaviours wherever they appear.

We must support survivors with compassion and confidentiality.

We must refuse to be silent in the face of any form of abuse.

If we walk this journey together with empathy, with courage, and with unity, we can create a society where every individual, regardless of gender, lives in freedom, dignity, and safety.

I thank you.