KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY LIMPOPO PREMIER, DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA, DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM FOR NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT MALAMULELE TAXI RANK, COLLINS CHABANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, VHEMBE DISTRICT

25 NOVEMBER 2026

Programme Director,
Members of the Executive Council,
Executive Mayor Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Miyelani Chauke,
Mayor of Collins Chabane Local Municipality, Cllr Hlunani Machebele,
Traditional Leaders,
Faith Based Leaders,
Representatives of Civil Society Organisations,
Women, Men, Young People and Learners,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Avuxeni, Ndi Matsheloni, Thobela, Good Morning, Goeie More,

There is no greater betrayal of humanity than a woman living in fear in the very home where she should feel safest, or a child growing up in a world where those entrusted with their protection become the source of their pain. A home should be a sanctuary, not a crime scene. A community should offer protection, not become a hiding place for perpetrators. And our children should inherit hope, not a legacy of violence.

Today, as we launch the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children, we do so with heavy hearts and a firm determination to confront this scourge. We cannot continue to gather year after year to condemn violence while women and children continue to be assaulted, raped and murdered.

Programme Director,

This year's campaign is guided by the theme, "Letsema: Men, Women, Boys and Girls Working Together to End Gender-Based Violence and Femicide," under the sub-theme, "Safety Cannot Wait as South Africa Acts to End Gender-Based Violence and Femicide."

These are not merely campaign slogans. They are a call for collective responsibility and immediate action.

The statistics confronting our province are deeply disturbing. According to the South African Police Service's second-quarter crime statistics for July to September 2026, Limpopo recorded 324 selected domestic violence-related crimes.

These included 267 rape cases, 33 attempted murders, 15 sexual assaults and nine murders.

Of the 267 rape victims, 181 were children, representing 67.8%. This means that more than two-thirds of the victims were children. Eight of the 15 sexual assault victims were also children. Women accounted for 66.7% of the combined 42 murder and attempted murder victims.

At district level, Mopani recorded the highest number of incidents at 79, followed by Capricorn and Vhembe with 75 incidents each. Sekhukhune recorded 51, while Waterberg recorded 44 incidents.

Mopani, Capricorn and Vhembe alone accounted for 70.7% of these reported cases.

These are not just numbers on a government report. Behind every statistic is a human being, a family traumatised, a child whose innocence has been stolen and a community whose sense of safety has been shattered.

What is particularly concerning is the pattern of increased domestic violence during the period leading into the festive season. It is deeply troubling that, as we gather to launch a campaign intended to protect women and children, many families are confronted with increased incidents of abuse and violence.

This must stop!

The 16 Days of Activism must never become a ceremonial exercise where we make speeches today and return to business-as-usual tomorrow.

Programme Director,

Government is not folding its arms in the face of this crisis. We are strengthening collaboration with the South African Police Service and other law enforcement agencies to improve prevention, ensure that reported cases are investigated, perpetrators are arrested and those found guilty face the full might of the law.

We are equally strengthening partnerships with the criminal justice system, social development services, traditional institutions, religious organisations and civil society to ensure that survivors receive the necessary protection, counselling and support.

However, we must be honest: government cannot win this battle alone.

This is where the spirit of Letsema becomes important. Every father must raise sons who respect women. Every mother and father must teach children the values of dignity, equality and respect. Every neighbour must refuse to turn a blind eye when abuse occurs. Traditional and religious leaders must speak out against violence, while communities must reject the culture of protecting perpetrators.

I want to make a special appeal to the men and boys of Limpopo: masculinity must never be measured by how much fear you can instil in a woman. True manhood is

demonstrated through responsibility, respect, self-control and the protection of those who are vulnerable.

A real man does not abuse, assault or intimidate. A real man protects, respects and empowers.

Programme Director,

As we approach the festive season, let us be clear: alcohol, unemployment, relationship disagreements or financial difficulties must never become excuses for violence. No circumstance justifies the abuse of another human being.

Safety cannot wait. It cannot wait for another woman to lose her life, another child to be violated or another family to be destroyed before we act.

Let us report abuse, support survivors and ensure that perpetrators have nowhere to hide. Let us also create safe spaces where victims can speak without fear of being judged or blamed.

The fight against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide does not end on 10 December when this campaign concludes. It must continue in our homes, our schools, our workplaces, our churches and every community across Limpopo, throughout all 365 days of the year.

Today, from Malamulele, let us send a powerful message across our province: We will not normalise violence. We will not protect perpetrators. We will not remain silent while women and children suffer.

Together, through Letsema, we can build a province where every woman is safe, every child is protected and every person can live with dignity. The time for talk is over. The time for action is now!

I therefore officially launch the 2026 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children in Limpopo Province.

Hikhensa! Ri a livhuwa! Re a leboga! Thank you!