



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Hon Fish Mahlalela MP, addresses Women Dialogue in Mpumalanga

15 August 2020

Deputy Minister of Tourism Hon Fish Mahlalela has today addressed Women Dialogue on COVID-19 and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide at his deployed Parliamentary Constituency area of Empuluzi, Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga.

The Women Dialogue follows a Men's Forum, which was also held virtually on the 11th August 2020, covering men's structures in the parliamentary constituency area of Empuluzi.

These fundamental dialogues happen during the month of August, which has a historical significance in the political life of our country.

The month of August is well known as the women's month, and this is the time that from anything else, we are called upon to reflect on pertinent issues affecting women and girl child.

These dialogues also take place during a twin task pandemics, which have devastated many livelihoods across our country, the Covid-19 pandemic and frequent reports of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.

The purpose of these dialogues is to have a deep reflections as a people, on this disturbing phenomenon, and find ways to mitigate its impact on society.

This issue is not only devastating for survivors of violence and their families, but also entails significant social and economic costs. Therefore, failure to address this issue entails a significant cost for the future. Our economy would not be able to carry the burden of the loss of lives.

Numerous studies have shown that children growing up with violence are more likely to become survivors themselves or perpetrators of violence in the future.

One characteristic of gender-based violence is that it knows no social or economic boundaries and affects women and girls of all socio-economic backgrounds.

Decreasing violence against women and girls requires a community-based, multi-pronged approach, and sustained engagement with multiple stakeholders. The most effective initiatives address underlying risk factors for violence, including social norms regarding gender roles, and the acceptability of violence by our society.

The violence meted against the LGBTIQ individuals can not be over emphasised.

Government has developed a Gender-Based Violence Policy frameworks to combat gender-based violence and supports national capacities to prevent violence and end impunity for perpetrators, ensure access to justice and protection of women and girls and to provide survivors with multi-sectoral support and services.

We believe that through the collective efforts of government, civil-society organisations and the business sector working together, we can broaden the impact of the campaign to combat this disturbing trend.

By supporting this campaign, thousands of South Africans have also helped to increase awareness of abuse and build support for victims and survivors of abuse.

Addressing a Joint Sitting of Parliament in September 2019, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa remarked that "to enhance the safety of women we are going to, as a matter of urgency, make the necessary amendments to our laws and policies to ensure that perpetrators of gender-based violence are brought to book".

As the Department of Tourism we are firmly committed to work with all multiple stakeholders to be part of this process and ensure that it succeeds in its endeavours to contribute to creating an environment where women and children are free, safe and protected.

We will do so guided by Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000 which was passed to ensure that everyone enjoy Constitutional rights. This Act ensures that women have equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms, in addressing the wrongs of the past.

The liberation of women girls will only be attained when they are given equal opportunities in work environment and in leadership positions, amongst a few.

We will also do so further guided by Domestic Violence Act, 1998 which was enacted to afford survivors of violence maximum protection from domestic abuse. Women, who are at the receiving end of domestic violence, now have a legal recourse that will ensure their protection.

In his address, the Deputy Minister said:

"When abuse occurs in a situation of trust, whether in the family, the church, in schools or elsewhere, the sense of betrayal is intensified."

He communicated a sad message that cases of GBVF have increased since the Lockdown started. The history of patriarchy has taught men that they are superior and can infringe other people's rights. This must be unlearned!

He stressed on the adherence of COVID-19 regulations on the wearing of masks, washing of hands, and sanitizing.

In closing, Deputy Minister shared that a programme, amongst others, on Responsible Drinking, will be initiated.

For more enquiries

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