

**ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE MINISTER IN THE
PRESIDENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR WOMEN, MS
BATHABILE DLAMINI (MP), ON THE OCCASION OF
DIALOGUE WITH WOMEN TRADITIONAL LEADERS**

Kwaggafontien Community Hall, Mpumalanga

21 February 2019

You're Majesties Queens

Representatives of CONTRALESA

Representatives of House of Traditional Leaders

Honourable Mayor

Honourable Councillors

Chaplain

Leaders of the Provincial Legislature

Chairperson of CRL

Representatives of CoGDA and the Dept. of Justice

It is with great honour to have an opportunity to address you on a critical issue facing our communities. Cultural beliefs are being twisted to give rise to patriarchal idea in which men must dominate women and women must live only to serve men.

South Africa is blessed with a population that has the freedom and constitutional rights to practise traditional and cultural beliefs. The Department of Women supports and encourages

communities to continue practising their traditions with pride so long that we guard against the violation of human rights.

South Africa has in the recent years had increased incidences of gender based violence, mainly against women and girls. Government responded to the scourge of abuse, neglect and exploitation by establishing the Inter-Ministerial Committee to Combat Violence against Women and Children and launching campaigns to fight the scourge of gender-based violence.

The President in his 2019 State of the Nation Address has responded to the call for the fight against gender-based violence with a commitment to increase the budget for gender equality and women's empowerment.

This dialogue then stems from the President's Call to Action to make the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence a 365 Day Campaign. As part of the department's on-going activities, engagements with various stakeholders continues to take place within Communities across South Africa.

From this dialogue the Department of Women hopes to encourage Traditional Leaders to actively debunk myths that are erroneously linked to culture, and are used to perpetuate incidents of gender-based violence.

Traditional Leaders, as custodians of culture, are ideally placed within communities to expose myths around patriarchy, ukuthwalwa, ukuhlolwa kwe'zintombi and notions of ownership over the bodies of women that continue to persist.

This partnership that has been created between government and traditional leaders is key as it can be a good model to be demonstrated and tested in other countries that are faced with the scourge of Gender Based Violence.

Thus, the department will take the lessons learnt through this partnership to the United Nations during the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) to be held at the United Nations Headquarters in March 2019.

In this dialogue the department intends to enable a conversation and an exchange of ideas, as well as to create a network among women traditional leaders in order to discuss ways and means of supporting and protecting women who are survivors of GBV; creating awareness of legislative bills that ensure the protection of rural communities as well as the affirmation of their constitutional rights as well as review and discuss the draft customary marriage bill and its implication for women in rural areas.

In conclusion, it is critical that we work together to ensure that we end the scourge of GBV so that our women and girls can also live in society free of violence and abuse. We need to do so because women, young and old, rich and poor, famous and not so famous experiences abuse. Violence against women cuts across all races, including class groups.

I hope that as we leave this place today we are all going to go out with one united voice that will change the lives of women and girls in communities.

I thank you.