

Traditional Leadership have the potential to play a positive role in addressing factors that can either fuel or mitigate GBV



South Africa- Violence against women is a widespread and a serious violation of human rights. Although the rates at which women are exposed to violence, vary from one country to another, statistics indicate that violence against women is a universal phenomenon and women are subjected to different forms of violence both within and outside their homes. With a global review of available data finding, the United Nations Secretary General has described violence against women as “reaching epidemic proportions.” Indeed, 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence.¹ According to a Homicide Report published by UNODC, Africa is the continent where women are most at risk of being killed by intimate partners or family members². Closer to home, in South Africa, it is estimated that nearly four

¹ WHO, Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women, p. 2 (“Only women aged 15 years and older were included, to differentiate violence against women from child sexual abuse.” p. 12), available at http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf.

² UNODC (2021). Global Study on Homicide

children are killed each day³; and approximately seven women are being killed, per day. According to the UNODC global homicide report, compared with other countries where statistics are more readily available, South Africa ranks among the five countries with the highest female homicide rates⁴. According to the report, the majority of the women victims are killed by intimate partners (predominately husband or boyfriend) or are family-related homicide (father, brother, son etc.).

In partnership with the Department of Correctional Services, UNODC, arranged a Indeed, today's event is an emphatic stride that demonstrates a key and pivotal partnership, with the Prominent, Traditional Leadership in Limpopo, that will be impactful in addressing the scourge of gender-based violence and in particular the killing of women and children. One must take into cognizance that Traditional leaders, are symbols of unity and are hence, in a most opportune position to reverse the epidemic of gender-based violence. They can further address the systematic, social inequality and disempowerment of women at a grassroots level; further engaging men to be activists on countering gender-based violence. Female Traditional Leaders are a key access point and can be enablers for change in supporting women to be intolerant of acts of violence, incurred against them, and to report it accordingly. Gender based violence is a disruption to the social order and cohesion of communities. Hence there needs to be closer link between the Traditional Leadership and the chain of justice.



Regional Commissioner Mr August Thokolo provided opening remarks at the event, whilst highlighting the significance of the partnership with the Traditional Leadership, indicated that, “offenders, after serving their sentences, should be integrated into the community to lead better lives”, and “they need the endorsement of the House of Traditional leaders, in order to be accepted by the community”.

Ms Zama Mopai, a lecturer at the University of Venda, confirmed the existence of an academic curriculum on traditional issues and customary law. She asserted that “Many crimes are done in the name of culture, and hence, over time we are not able to define the meaning of culture” but “it should not take the toll for GBV and other crimes.” She concluded that: culture is a living thing

³ <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/more-350-children-murdered-south-africa-between-october-and-december-2021-0>

⁴ <https://mg.co.za/health/2021-04-14-sayhername-the-faces-of-south-africas-femicide-epidemic/>

that evolves and reflects the soul and needs of the community, and “can accommodate and address emerging issues like GBV and drug abuse. “

The leader of the House of Traditional Leaders, Hosi Ngove, in his remarks, indicated his willingness to have a formal relationship with UNODC and the Department of Correctional Services. He asserted that the majority of victims and offenders come directly from rural areas, and it is the responsibility of traditional affairs to address crimes like GBV. He indicated his disappointment in the delay in the passing of legislation such as the Traditional Court Bill.

Deputy Minister Hon. Holomisa, emphasized the significance of a partnership with the House of Traditional leaders, who have the as they have authority over approximately “18m people” and “are partners of positive change”, and are part of the solution to addressing GBV.



The Regional Representative for UNODC ROSAF, emphasized the appalling statistics related to the killing of women and children, and emphasized the importance of the realization of SDG 5 and 16; and the role of “female Traditional Leaders in creating “an enabling environment” for increased reporting, referral and support of GBV cases.

Linda Naidoo, summarily indicated the three key outcomes of the meeting to include the capacity building of traditional leaders, especially female traditional leaders, so that they can enable gender equality and empowerment within communities; and the development of a guideline that incorporates the role of Traditional Leaders in addressing GBV and the killing of women.

