

News Bulletin

MEN'S DIALOGUE



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

FATHER'S DAY DIALOGUE (VIRTUAL)

FATHERS SPEAK TO HEAL THE NATION

Date: 21 June 2020  Time: 12:00

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Parliament: Leading men speak to the Nation

“To curb these atrocities, they recognised the role that the Men’s Dialogue can play in society to raise our consciousness about issues affecting women and children.”

In response to the serious spike in gender-based violence (GBV), the offices of the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), and the Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), hosted the Father’s Day National Men’s Dialogue to engage men directly to find

possible interventions in the fight against this (GBV) pandemic. Opening the Men’s Dialogue, the Deputy Speaker of the NA, Mr Lechesa Tsenoli, said the Men’s Dialogue Forum constitutes an ongoing discussion to combat the scourge of GBV. “We are here to continue the relay and to carry a baton that was left to us by those who came before us,” he said.

He added that: “We all strive for a country that is free of violence, a country in which all genders live together as equals. That is the guiding principle of our endeavours. And that is an important base for humanity.

“We also need to reflect on the critical contribution that this forum will make. Or, in other creative ways, we can come up with something to build on what we have achieved so far to address gender-based violence. Most importantly, we need to communicate our resolves, monitor and evaluate their effectiveness,” he added.

Also speaking at the Forum, Mr Ntando Yola, of the South African Aids Council Men’s Sector, said today is not a happy Father’s Day because as fathers “we have a role and responsibility to contribute to

society, that must be free of women abuse, in which children do not live in fear”. “In the midst of the ills we are experiencing, we all have a responsibility to make amends. To that effect, we organised men to stand against all forms of violence in our society, to ensure that men, as a collective, stand against all forms of violence against women and children,” he added.

Mr Yola said to curb these atrocities, they recognised the role that the Men’s Dialogue can play in society to raise our consciousness about issues affecting women and children.



Mr Lechesa Tsenoli

Ms Sylvia Lucas

GBV is now a crisis that needs urgent attention

“Parliament must make the sex offenders register public and easily accessible online, and lobby the Judicial Council to impose harsher jail sentences for perpetrators of gender-based violence”

The Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Ms Sylvia Lucas, says the resurgence of violence against women is now a matter of national importance which requires Parliament's urgent response and prioritisation.

Speaking during the Father's Day National Dialogue, Ms Lucas said gender-based-violence (GBV) was the most extreme expression of unequal gender relations in society, and called on joint action from all sectors to “ensure a crystallised and well-coordinated response to the GBV crisis”.

“It is first and foremost a violation of human

rights and global health issue that cuts across boundaries of economic, wealth, culture, religion, age and sexual orientation. Whenever gender-based violence occurs, it is a major obstacle for ensuring gender justice, which further poses a serious threat to democratic development and public health. GBV and femicide are huge barriers to achieving sustainable development, economic growth and stable communities,” said Ms Lucas.

She proposed, as a solution to GBV, a paradigm shift and focus on the root cause of violence, founded on gender-based power relations and gender-

based discrimination. She also called for the acceleration of the clearance of the backlogs at forensic laboratories related to gender-based violence and sexual assaults.

“Parliament must make the sex offenders register public and easily accessible online, and lobby the Judicial Council to impose harsher jail sentences for perpetrators of gender-based violence,” she recommended.

Ms Lucas said Parliament recognises the need for a nationwide response to GBV and femicide, where every sector and individual in our society can participate towards ending this scourge.

She announced that Parliament will initiate a public engagement process to solicit the views of women regarding the enactment of legislation that will fight femicide. She said this was also a resolution of the 2019 Women's Parliament, where women appealed to Parliament to enact legislation that will fight femicide.

According to her, Parliament will also continue to exercise its oversight role over the work of the executive in order to ensure a sustained focus in response to plans and budget allocation, so as to root out GBV and femicide.

GBV Perpetrators can change- Shai



Mr Patrick Shai



Ms Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu



Dr Joe Phaahla

“real men know that masculinity is to provide and protect, not to harm”

The Men's Dialogue was facilitated by the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Lechesa Tsenoli, and a veteran television actor, Mr Patrick Shai, an outspoken reformed perpetrator of gender-based violence

(GBV), who is now doing advocacy work.

Mr Shai shared with the forum how painful it was that men who change after committing GBV, remain guilty forever in our communities.

“Change is pain, I am hurt by my past but I remain resolute to the values that I stand for, and I am not apologetic for having changed,” he said.

The forum was also

addressed by the Deputy Ministers of Health and Social Development, Dr Joe Phaahla and Ms Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu, respectively, who also added their voices in calling for a joint effort to end gender-based violence.

The forum also heard that the patterns and persistence of gender-based violence are interwoven into social norms and power

relations, and leave deep scars on our society that result in psychosocial trauma – and adversely affect social cohesion, and also lead to the stigmatisation of survivors, and have negative developmental outcomes.

“We have learnt from HIV that stigma itself is a pandemic, and we have a lot of stigmas in this country which will destroy the nation,”

warned Deputy Minister Bogopane-Zulu. Deputy Minister Phaahla said: “It is up to us as parents to instil values of citizenry in our children, and to tell our boys not to glorify violence, and set high values through committed fatherhood to promote non-violence in our homes and communities. Real men protect their families, real men know that masculinity is to provide and protect, not to harm.”

All men must change the way we think about women, says Rev Storey

Rev Professor Peter Storey, a former Methodist Bishop and President of the South African Council of Churches said that among the complex reasons behind gender-based violence (GBV), culture is an important factor. "Some cultures have been more successful than others in abolishing male dominance," he said, "but too many males in our country treat culture as a god; they hide behind 'my culture' to excuse misuse and abuse of women."

Culture is not a static thing and patriarchy is no longer acceptable, the

Rev Storey continued. "Women are not property and all of us males in all cultures need to be challenged to recognise the full autonomy and status of women, and to behave accordingly."

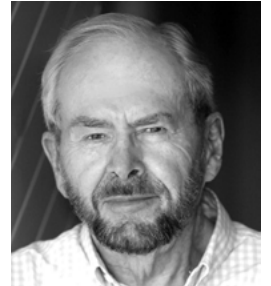
He said that the culture of male dominance and insensitivity to gender violence manifested itself also at police stations, where female victims of GBV were supposed to enjoy some temporary refuge. "Regrettably, at police stations women are exposed to the perpetuation of violence. When they seek to lay a charge against perpetrators, they are

often laughed at and ridiculed by the police," added Rev Storey.

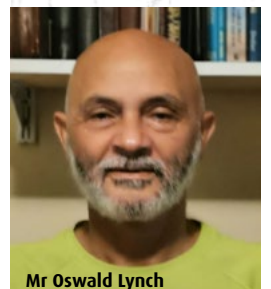
"In this regard, the South African Police Service are a disgrace. They are part of the problem instead of being part of the answer." He said that a massive, ongoing education drive was necessary to curb GBV, to remove these stereotypes from the minds of men. Churches could play an important role, but they too were often guilty of patriarchy. "When churches treat women as second-class members, they must not be surprised if their male members get the wrong message."

He also hoped that women would become more militant in their struggle against violence that targets them, and that every institution in the land needed to be pressured to embrace the message that "Black Women's Lives Matter".

"In 2003, Christian and Muslim women in Liberia even withheld sex from their spouses to help stop a war. What would happen if South African women did the same until the GBV that is injuring so many of them ceased? Maybe it would stop the war against women in our land."



Rev Professor Peter Storey



Mr Oswald Lynch



Mr Russel de Vree



Mr Shakes Mashengqana

We need to fight gender-based violence as a society

In session writers spoke to men in the City of Cape Town's Cape Flats communities, where violent crime including abuse against women and children is often reported by the media. The Cape Flats townships that are always referred to as "violent crime hotspots" include Bonteheuwel, Elsie's River, Khayelitsha, Manenberg, Heideveld, Hanover Park, Mitchells Plain, and Grassy Park.

Mr Oswald Lynch, a veteran community activist whose activism started before the forced removals era on the Cape Flats and who has stayed in many communities on the Cape Flats, including Vasco, Goodwood, Elsie's

River, Bishop Lavis and now in Mitchells Plain, said that from his perspective, gender-based-violence (GBV) is entrenched in working-class homes.

"It can be said that the current violence is committed by our young men whose role models are their fathers, who abused and continue to abuse their wives. There are, however, other deep socio-economic factors that are the fundamental causes. The question is, how can we stop the cycle of socialisation that passes this problem of GBV from one generation to the next."

Education, economic

emancipation and the provision of decent houses to the needy, in addition to the promotion of morals in our communities, are among the solutions to stop GBV Mr Lynch believes.

Mr Russel de Vree, who is a son of an African man and a coloured woman, and who also stayed in different communities in the Cape Flats, also holds a view that GBV is a manifestation of a very deep and complex problem that will require a concerted effort to eradicate.

He attributed GBV entirely to the system of apartheid. "Unfortunately, the problem is not going

to resolve itself. It calls for mass action in order to remove it. It is with us in our communities and its victims are women in our communities. We must come together to defeat it."

Mr Shakes Mashengqana of Khayelitsha's Site B Section said the problem is the failure of the family and the church units in the community to mould a child. He said families have abandoned their responsibility of instilling the right values in children, including the value of Ubuntu. Instead, parents rely on schools for the inculcation of discipline in their children, Mr Mashengqana believes.

"As long as the family unit is folding its hands and just dumping the child at school for the inculcation of values in the mind of the child, the problem of GBV is going to remain alive and very dangerous in this advanced era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

We must flatten the curve of GBV

In session writers talked to men in the street and leaders of communities across racial lines in the False Bay area of the City of Cape Town about the growing problem of gender-based violence (GBV). These men argued that the government has proven that it has the capacity to prevent what is dangerous to the people by successfully flattening the curve of the spread of the coronavirus. Therefore, it should be able to deal with violence against women.



Furthermore, it is not by a heavenly miracle that the government flattens the curve of a fast and sophisticated coronavirus. They did it by putting together scientific and strident strategies to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. These same methods must be applied in the case of GBV.

Mr Paul Ferrera of Somerset West said: "The government knows that the source of the problem of domestic violence and gender-based violence (GBV) is substance abuse

and alcohol. It must just act." if the government is able to deal successfully with coronavirus, he went on to say, it can certainly deal with gender-based violence.

Mr Gorahd Peterson of Macassar Township said: "The government created regulations with speed to fight the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and has done that successfully. There are strong laws in South Africa to fight whatever violence that emerges. The government fails to apply the laws of

the country. They must apply the laws that are there. That Men's Parliament is not going to assist, I am not optimistic in that regard, Sir."

Mr Aristole Labo said: "I am a refugee in South Africa and I have been here for some years. South Africans have abandoned everything to the government and the hands of the government are full. It depends on all South Africans to stop all forms of violence, including the xenophobic one. As long as South Africans

leave the issue of solving the problem of violence to the government, it is going to worsen instead of flattening."

Mr Khaya Diza of Somerset West's Lwandle Township said: "It is puzzling that the government calls on everybody to fight gender-based violence, yet the same government makes GBV offenders feel comfortable in prison and releases them from jail before they complete their jail sentences. So long as there is no effective punishment this won't stop."



Rev Nkosinathi Geja

'Communities have a role to play in raising the boy child'

The participants who represented a wide spectrum of men's organisations in the Men's Dialogue made far-reaching and cutting-edge proposals to fight gender-based violence (GBV).

They said all the available platforms must be used to inculcate in the mind of a boy child correct morality and the values of Ubuntu. Families, schools, universities, churches and traditional authorities were urged to come together to ensure that the boy child is taught the right values. The participants agreed

that GBV must be dealt with at its roots as what is happening is a manifestation of a very deep and dangerous problem. Education and rehabilitation were among the list of the proposed strategies. The role of churches and traditional authorities was highlighted as very critical in the implementation of those strategies, particularly strategies on the education of the values of Ubuntu.

Moving the vote of thanks to all the participants, the President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa's

Young Men's Guild, Rev Nkosinathi Geja, called for a mind shift on the biological definition of the word "father", which he called "very narrow". He said the word father is a title that in its original meaning meant worth emulation.

Rev Geja appealed to African communities to reclaim the lost inheritance that went with the title father, and which was one of the pillars in the creation of a man. He said at the crux of the overarching meaning of the word was that everybody in the community played a role in

the formation of a young man in the community, and all those who did that shared the title "father".

"Our forebears kept the correct meaning of the word father, and we must reclaim that correct definition. It is that correct definition which will certainly assist in the efforts of education and rehabilitation of men, especially the young ones, as the title father in essence calls for collective responsibility of the formation of a boy child into manhood."

“Our forebears kept the correct meaning of the word father, and we must reclaim that correct definition”