

MEC VR Shongwe's Key Note Address on the Red Carpet Woman in Blue Mega  
Fest on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2015

Mpumalanga Provincial Commissioner, Lt General Mark Magadlela

Provincial Chairperson of CPF, Mr Kavin Pillay

Deputy Provincial Commissioners,

Brigadiers

Most importantly our guests of honour, the Woman In Blue

Members of the media,

Distinguished guests,

I greet you all.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me a great pleasure to address you on this very important event that SAPS in the Province have organised in honor of our woman in blue uniform.

This is so because the Government of the day declared that the Month of August is dedicated to celebrating all woman in the country, young and old, black and white. Our celebration of Woman's Month is motivated by the historic march by woman in 1956 to protest against the pass laws and other discriminatory policies of the then apartheid government. That history is well known and I will not go deeper into it.

Woman's Month must deepen the discussions about unequal power relations between men and women in a society that largely favours men. It is in this regard that a critique has been levelled at us, "MEN", accusing us of treating the question of women's oppression under a patriarchal society as a matter that is less important.

We have noted that, those who strongly advocating for a radical focus on gender relations have easily earned the label of being sectarian and not advancing the interests of the people as a whole.

Program Director, having said all this, we must recognise that we are all a product of a society characterised by class oppression, racial discrimination, as well as patriarchal domination.

In the South African context, the patriarchal system ensures male domination. Under such a system, women occupy subordinate positions and that dominance is still evident in many aspects of life including the economy, the family, the church, in culture etc.

With all that being said, the ANC led government has made notable strides to address this social ills I have noted above. We are on course to reverse this injustices and it must be noted that Government needs the support of society as a whole in order to register maximum success.

Program Director, I noted that the experience of rural black women under patriarchy is different to the experience of urban women. This is expressed clearly by the stereo type that young women who depend on the Child Support Grant (CSG) as their only means of income are vilified in the public discourse.

They are depicted as lazy and unwilling to roll up their sleeves and engage in productive employment. Some even argue that poor young women deliberately fall pregnant in order to access the Child Support Grant.

With respect Program Director, as a Member of the ANC, and a Chairperson in Gert Sibande in particular, we conduct door to doors from time to time. What we discover during this engagement with our people is shocking.

At times I wish that we could take along the people who are calling for the scrapping of the Child Support Grants. Only then, they will understand what this social assistance means to single parents out there.

Single parenting is another thorny issue in the ear and women are always left alone to fend and raise children on their own. Again, the experience of working independent woman may not necessarily be the same as that of the urban employed and self sustained woman. For a rural unemployed woman, the Child Support Grant becomes the only income.

Program Director, the historic Women's Charter adopted on 17 April 1954, at the founding conference of the Federation of South African Women in Johannesburg asserted that,

**“We women do not form a society separate from the men. There is only one society, and it is made up of both women and men. As women we share the problems and anxieties of our men, and join hands with them to remove social evils and obstacles to progress”**

With all due respect to all men, it is my observation that a significant number of men are not joining hand with woman to remove the social evils and obstacle to progress yet woman pleaded long time ago that we work together.

I take time to listen to many successful people in general and there is one common denominator in many of them. Program Director, many will tell you about the central role played by the mother and little is said about the father and it always bothers me that, we, MEN are absent in the raising of our children.

That’s why I want to deliberately shout this slogan, **(Wathinta Abafazi!!!!)**.

Ladies and gentlemen, with all this being said, it is now an open secret that woman and young woman in particular must liberate themselves through education. Education is the ultimate liberator and young woman must prioritise their education in order to access the opportunities that are being created.

The Government of the day took a deliberate decision to make access to education free. In this day in age, we are not expecting young woman who don’t even have a grade 12, because there are just no excuses.

The social system in the country is designed to take care of all eventualities and education should be a young woman's priority.

Program Director, we are celebrating woman in blue in the month of August and it is sad that we are beginning to see the gruesome act of killing police in the country and in our Province in particular is raising its ugly head.

This is despite our efforts in the Province in particular to promote greater community participation in the safety of police through our slogan which the National Government have also praised, that says, “ **Wabulala Iphoyisa, Wabulala Umphakathi**”.

I must convey this message to you today that, the ANC in its Provincial Lekgotla took direct and unambiguous resolutions against killing of police officials. The ANC agreed that it must engage with its branches around the Province to work closely with Police to end this vicious cycle.

In the Legislature on Tuesday, the Chief Whip of the ANC also raised the matter sharply and called on the communities to join hands with Police to reverse this ugly act.

Program Director, this is so because this ANC led Government understand that the Police are the shield that protects our people from harm, abuse and victimisation. What will we be if we allow criminals to take away that shield?. We will be vulnerable and this country will be a banana Republic.

Without a strong and visible policing, rape and killing will be the order of the day, drugs and substance abuse will be a staple food for our people, house breaking and general disregards for the rule of law will be an order of the day.

We must never allow that and appreciate the voices that are condemning the killing of police officers.

In closing Program Director, as we celebrate woman month and rolling a Red Carpet for our Woman in Blue, let me call on all woman in the South African Police Service, particularly here in Mpumalanga to rally and support one another.

You are all woman and you must rise together and support each other. You must also support your male counterparts to rise with you. I am calling on you to be a living proof of the historic Women's Charter. I appeal that the charter finds expression in your daily attitude and work ethics.

I wish Program Director, that they show us that "woman does not form a society separate from the men".

That "there is only one society, and it is made up of both women and men".

That "as women you share the problems and anxieties of your men, and join hands with them to remove social evils and obstacles to progress"

**Wabulala Iphoyisa!!!!!!**

**Malibongwe!!!!!!**

**Wathinta Abafazi!!!!**

**Wathinta Imbokodo!!!!!!**

Thank you.