

South African men pledge to stand up against abuse

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She was encouraged by the growing number of men who were getting involved in the fight against the abuse of women and children, said the Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Susan Shabangu, speaking at an International Men's Day event in Soshanguve, Tshwane on 21 November.

The minister, along with First Lady Tobeka Zuma, urged men to get involved in the 16 Days of Activism campaign and create a culture in which women and children were protected and could feel safe.

International Men's Day is an annual event observed in November. It is designed to focus on men's health, improving gender relations, promoting gender equality and highlighting positive male role models. It is also an opportunity for men to celebrate their contributions to the community, family, marriage and child care. Shabangu said while men were primarily looked up to as the nurturers of boys, women should also be involved. Both parents had the responsibility of raising children.

Zuma said men must be part of the solution to end the abuse of women and children. "Not reporting abuse means you are part of the problem," she said. The first lady also called on fathers to spend more time talking to their sons about gender violence and teaching them to respect women. "Fathers should not only spend time reading newspapers. They should give themselves time to spend with the boy child. Real men don't abuse."

Men who attended the event said that they were determined to work together with women to fight against gender violence as well as play their part in encouraging others to do the same.

Ephraim Baloyi, who attended, said he was positive about the role women played in society, and that they should, along with children, be protected at all costs. "Men," Baloyi said, "are supposed to love and take care of their families. They should not abuse their children. Men who abuse their wives and children should be locked up in jail."

The minister also called on police officers to take the plight of men who were being abused just as seriously as that of women and children. "We are all human beings. We all feel the pain, and we all must be protected," she said.

The International Men's Day celebration and awareness campaign is part of the South African government's theme for #16Days, #CountMeIn: Together Moving a Non-Violent South Africa Forward.