

Not all cases of gender-based violence reported

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21 Apr 2013

While there are many cases of gender-based violence (GBV), most of them are not being reported which makes it difficult for government to intervene and end the scourge.

This was a concern raised by Deputy Minister of Public Enterprises, Bulelani Magwanishe, during his visit to the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan, where he visited various communities as part of an Anti-Rape campaign.

The Anti-Rape campaign, which was launched by President Jacob Zuma in February, aims at educating and raising stakeholder awareness about rape so as to encourage victims to report assaults and discourage potential offenders.

Magwanishe started the day with a visit to Amcare, a centre which offers various programmes for victims of GBV. It also runs a Voluntary Counselling facility, which tests and dispenses ARV and TB medication to patients. The centre also offers a comprehensive Home Based Care service to the community and also performs male circumcision, amongst others.

The deputy minister was accompanied by Chief Whip in the Gauteng Provincial Legislature, Brian Hlongwa and MMC for Health in the Ekurhuleni Metro, Khosi Thwala-Maluleke.

Door-to-door visit

The visit also included a door-to-door visit to the Ramaphosa informal settlements, where they visited rape victims to express their sympathy, check if they had received any professional assistance to help the family and victims deal with the pain as well as check what more government could do to assist the families.

The rape victims included an elderly woman, who was gang raped by four young men, a girl who was raped by her father, when she was 11 years old and a middle aged woman. The victims were given blankets to keep warm during winter.

Magwanishe assured the victims that government would do everything in its power to come and assist the victims. He described the men who rape the women as cowards, calling on all men to act against abuse of women and children.

"Women are human beings, not assets; they have rights to economic opportunities. Perfect men go all out to protect their women and children and if you heard a woman screaming because she is beaten, you must go out and stop it," said Magwanishe.

Rape kits handed over

Hundreds of rape kits were also handed over to four police stations - Reiger, Germiston, Alberton and Primrose. The kits include a set of items used by medical personnel for gathering and preserving physical evidence following an allegation of sexual assault which can be used in the rape investigation.

Some of the items include toothpaste, toothbrushes, sanitary towels, cosmetics and panties. They will be handed over to the victims of rape after being examined by the doctor at the police station so that when they leave the station, they will be clean and regain their respect.

Hlongwa called on the community to work with government, noting that government alone cannot tackle this problem without their assistance.

"On our own, we can't solve this problem, we need the community to hold hands and fight this battle together. In all our problems including unemployment, rape and abuse cannot be used as an excuse," Hlongwa said.

Thwala-Maluleke, who was impressed with the report that two of the three victims' perpetrators were given life sentences, said that government want to see people who do bad things punished for their actions.

The visit ended with a community meeting at Reiger Park Civic Centre, where Magwanishe addressed the community, where more blankets were handed over to the disabled and elderly groups.

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