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# NEWSFLASH

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## New Thuthuzela Care Centre To Open in Limpopo



Government will open a new Thuthuzela Care Centre in Limpopo later in November. This was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa during his address to the second Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) held in Midrand from Tuesday to Wednesday. Expanding the network of Thuthuzela Care Centres was one of the commitments made at the 2018 Presidential Summit. "Apart from being places of refuge and support, these centres are proving effective in improving conviction rates. In the last financial year, a conviction rate of 77 per cent was obtained for cases reported at Thuthuzela Care Centres" President Ramaphosa said.

Districts across the country, 45, have at least one GBV shelter and 85 per cent of these are government funded. The Summit was attended by Ministers, Premiers and representative of civil society organisations, amongst hundreds of delegates and authorities who were present. Various breakaway sessions discussed solutions under the six pillars of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, which are accountability, coordination and leadership; prevention and rebuilding social cohesion; justice, safety and protection; response, support and healing; economic power as well as research and information systems.



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Panelists at the summit included CGE Commissioner, cabinet Ministers, international guests and first ladies. Acting Chairperson of the Commission for Gender Equality (BELOW) was part of the CGE's delegation.



### 'Strengthen oversight bodies like Parliament and CGE to bolster fight against GBVF'

Discussions in plenaries and breakaway sessions at the second Presidential Summit on GBVF have proposed several interventions in the fight against GBVF, including that government should strengthen institutions of accountability like Parliament and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE). These proposals could be included in the summit's final declarations. Other discussed proposals include that the state

should amplify funding for the implementation of the National Strategic Plan (NSP), and partnerships with academic institutions and the GBVF Response Fund to address the DNA backlog that is affecting the handling of rape cases by the courts. Officials and Commissioners of the Commission for Gender Equality participated in the summit over the two days in Midrand.

### Effects of teenage pregnancy perpetuate cycle of poverty in which rural women are trapped

A recent news article published by the SABC confirmed that 150 girls, between the ages of 10 and 14 years old, gave birth in the Free State Province. In terms of the law a child younger than 16 years is not regarded as being capable of consenting to sexual intercourse. Section 15 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act of 2007 clearly states that an act of sexual penetration with a child (under the age of 16), even if that act is consensual, is considered to be statutory rape.



As the December school holidays and festive season approach, we need to be mindful of the fact in most instances children will be left to entertain themselves and together with the increased levels of child abuse and gender-based violence in the rural parts of the Free State, the safety of our children should be paramount. We should also be cognisant of the stigma that still surrounds sexual reproductive health and the teaching thereof. A re-evaluation of what we are teaching and how we are teaching our children

about sexual reproductive health should be embarked upon, to ensure that the correct information is accessible throughout the province. The presence and support of social workers and nurses at schools should be prioritised to provide learners with the necessary information and support. Collaboration between departments is therefore of paramount importance.



The attainment of Sustainable Development Goal ("SDG") 3, which is related to "maternal and new-born health" and the Department of Health's strategic objective to decrease the rate of maternal, infant and child mortality rates is directly impacted by the high rates of teenage pregnancy.

**Leandi Esterhuizen is a Legal Officer for the Commission for Gender Equality in the Free State Province. You can read her full article on [www.cge.org.za](http://www.cge.org.za).**