



Women's Month: Fight against gender violence is a 365 day campaign

In South Africa, August is not just another month. It is Women's Month.

On 9 August, National Women's

Day is celebrated as a public holiday. This is because on 9 August 1956, about 20 000 brave women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

They were fighting for their freedom by protesting against the pass laws forced on them by the apartheid government. Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Dora Tamana, Sophie de Bruin and Amina Cachalia were among the leaders.

■ Celebrations

To remember this day and in honour of all South Africa's brave women, special celebrations will take place countrywide during the whole month of August.

As part of the celebrations, the campaign '16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children' has been extended to a year-long programme.

■ 365 Days

The new programme is called the 365 Days of Action to End Gender and Child Directed Violence. It aims to

strengthen the fight against violence directed at women and children for the whole year and not only during the 16 days period.

The Deputy Minister of Provincial and Local Government, Nomatyala Hangana, leads the 365 Days campaign. She said the programme

should not be seen as taking the place of the 16 Days.

■ What to do if you are raped or abused

- Do not change clothes or wash your body because it might destroy important evidence.
- Report the case to the police as soon as possible. It is best to report within 72 hours so that evidence such as blood and semen (sperm) can still be collected for testing.
- Do not take any alcohol before going to the police. You need to be clear-headed when you give your statement.
- The police will refer you to a clinic or a doctor for examination.
- Go for counselling. There are support groups and people who specialise in rape counselling.

National Network on Violence Against Women

National Office: (012) 348-1231/3

Lifeline National Crisis Line

0861 322 322

Batho Pele Gateway Call Centre: 1020

■ Rural areas

With this campaign, more attention will be given to women who are at risk of being abused in the rural areas. This is because the 16 Days campaign has been more active in the cities than in rural areas.

"We want to change that by empowering women in rural areas through local municipalities," Hangana said.

- Ndivhuwo Khangale