

**ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL  
AFFAIRS, PHOLILE SHAKANTU DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ONE  
STOP CENTRES AT THE MBABANE GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL, MANZINI RFM  
HOSPITAL AND LUBOMBO REFERRAL  
ON 9 MARCH, 2020 AT THE MBABANE GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL**

Honourable Minister For Health  
Your Excellency The Us Ambassador  
Your Excellency UNICEF Representative  
Principal Secretaries  
Government Officials  
Ladies And Gentleman

May I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the opportunity given to me to address you on this auspicious occasion. This is a milestone and an important day in the country where we officially open three facilities that will attend to persons who will encounter the unfortunate, unplanned and uninvited crime of sexual and domestic violence in their lives.

Prior to the enactment of the SODV Act, domestic and sexual violence cases were largely under reported and as a result under-prosecuted. Making a decision on whether or not to report domestic abuse is an extremely difficult and burdensome decision for a victim of domestic abuse. It is even more difficult where the victim is a man or when the perpetrator is a family member. The SODV Act converted common law crimes to be statutory crimes and introduced some new offences to better address sexual and gender based violence cases. Most of the crimes under the SODV Act are not new, they have always been a part of our law. The enactment of this legislation has given courage to many to come forward and report such cases without fear of victimization or discrimination.

May I mention that the One Stop Centres are not gender biased. They are for both men and women. They are for all citizens, regardless of age, race or social standing. Every person who has been violated in whatever manner is and will be attended to.

The main objectives of these facilities are;

- To reduce secondary victimization to victims of sexual and gender based violence,
- To reduce the cycle time for the finalization of cases,
- To maximize conviction rates, and
- To restore the victim to his/her optimum state of health.

And most importantly, to provide all services and help required by a victim of sexual and gender based violence, under one roof.

The centres will also be linked to the courts. Victims will receive progress reports on their cases through a case manager who will also play the role of victim assistance officer. This is an achievement which will bring relief to victims by making it easier for them to receive information on their cases. The One Stop Centres aim to provide comprehensive services to victims of Sexual and Gender Based Violence under one roof.

May I at this juncture acknowledge Her Ladyship, Justice Mummcy Dlamini who, during her tenure as Director of Public Prosecutions, took the lead in advocating for the establishment of the One Stop Centres in the country. We thank you for your bold and visionary leadership. You recognized the secondary victimization of victims of sexual and gender based violence after the occurrence of the crime, that is, reporting the crime to the police, seeking medical and

psychological help and going through court proceedings. We are here today because of your strong advocacy.

May I also thank the National Prosecuting Authority of the Republic of South Africa for assisting and guiding the local team in implementing the concept. This was done through the development of a training manual, job shadowing exercise and practical training at the South African One Stop Centres popularly known as Thuthuzela Centres.

The establishment of the One Stop Centres would not have been possible without the financial support from UNICEF and the Embassy of the United States of America to whom we are deeply grateful.

We thank UNICEF for refurbishing the structures and procuring medical equipment for the One Stop Centres.

We also thank the University Research Company (URC) for refurbishing the Lubombo Referral Hospital site.

Appreciation also goes to the Ministry of Health for buying into this vision by allocating space in their facilities to accommodate the centres.

The operation of the centres would not have been a success had it not been for the close collaboration between the Royal Eswatini Police Service, health practitioners, social workers, Prosecution Department and non governmental organisations like SWAGAA.

To the officers at these sites, the success and or failure of cases depend on the manner in which you handle the victims. I urge all of you to show professionalism at all

times. We further implore the supervisors to ensure that the centres operate on a 24 hour basis.

Today I also unveil the **Prosecutor's Guide on the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Charges** which has been developed to ensure uniformity in the drafting of charges nationwide. I am deeply grateful to the DPP for ensuring that the guide is developed. On that note, I urge all prosecutors to refer to same when drafting charges under the Act. Our utmost appreciation goes to UNICEF for financially supporting the development of the guide.

Allow me to conclude with a special request. As we are all aware, the country has four regions. Today we are officially opening One Stop Centres in three regions. We have one more to go. I take this opportunity to request the Ministry of Health to allocate space to accommodate a similar centre in the Shiselweni region. The plea also goes to our partners to financially support the establishment of a centre in the Shiselweni region. Our future plan is to bring this service closer to the people, starting with the densely populated areas in the country like Buhleni and Siphofaneni to mention a few.

As the Ministry Of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, we are determined to create a legacy to fight sexual and gender based violence through collaboration and partnerships.

And now therefore....

I, in collaboration with my colleague the Honourable Minister for Health declare the One Stop Centres at the Lubombo Referral Hospital, Manzini RFM hospital and Mbabane Government Hospital officially opened.