**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO: 1879**

**DATE OF QUESTION: 21 AUGUST 2020**

**DATE OF SUBMISSION: 04 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**Ms N H Maseko-Jele (ANC) to ask the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services[🟊329] [Question submitted for oral reply now placed for written reply because it is in excess of quota (Rule 137(8))]:**

In order to address the issue of secondary victimisation, how will his department streamline and centralise reporting, investigative and court processes between the SA Police Service, the National Prosecuting Authority and judiciary so as to avoid repetitive statement-taking from the victim?

**NW2329E**

**REPLY:**

Every effort is made to minimize and prevent any secondary trauma of the victim and a number of procedures and measures are in place to prevent this.

However, whilst the prosecution guard against additional statements from the same witness, in some instances there may be a need for supplementary statements to be provided and filed in the relevant police docket. This is to ensure that a comprehensive and detailed investigated docket and trial-ready case is put forward for prosecution where a *prima facie* case exists.

All relevant stakeholders in relation to Gender-based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) matters – such as for the South African Police Service in respect to investigations, Department of Social Development and non-governmental organisations on trauma containment services, the Department of Health regarding forensic medical examinations, National Prosecuting Authority as the prosecution, and the judiciary – all play a crucial collective role towards enhancing a victim-centric approach and minimising secondary victimisation.

The following initiatives, as implemented by the NPA, play a specific role towards minimizing any secondary victimization and ensuring a victim-centric approach in improving service delivery and support to victims of GBV:

The Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs) have specifically been established as a mechanism to minimize secondary victimization, as the objective of the TCC model is to provide all related services (medical, psycho-social, statement taking, follow-up services) at a 24-hour One Stop Centre. There are currently 55 TCC-sites nationally, with six (6) additional sites in the process of being added to the list.

Measures such as quality trauma containment assistance to victims, forensic medical examinations, specifically designed court preparation programmes to collectively increase the quality of prosecutions and achieve higher conviction rates all play a role.

The current court preparation model provides essential services to all witnesses to appear in courts, and 50% of their focus is specifically on victims of sexual offences.

In addition, the NPA Sexual Offences and Community Affairs (SOCA) Unit has developed a comprehensive training module (as part of the advanced sexual offences training curriculum) dealing with all related aspects on social context sensitivity awareness in a prosecutorial decision-making environment. The training manual specifically includes a module on secondary victimisation, its possible impact and how prosecutors should avoid it in GBVF matters.

Our dedicated Sexual Offences Courts make use of a number of interventions to reduce secondary trauma for victims, such as preparation services, pre-and post-trial trauma debriefing services, intermediary services, private testifying room/closed court services (via a closed-circuit TV system) and private waiting rooms for adult and child victims.

The aforementioned initiatives and activities are specifically aimed at constantly improving service delivery, which includes minimising any secondary victimization.

The recently promulgated Regulations give further impetus to section 55A of the Sexual Offences Act, 2007 and provide for the required facilities, devices, equipment, and services that these courts have to offer to be a designated Sexual Offences Court. All these measures are aimed at reducing secondary victimization.

In addition thereto, we are pleased to inform this House that three new Bills pertaining to preventing and combating GBV have recently been approved by Cabinet for introduction into Parliament and these Bills, once passed, will go a long way in further reducing and preventing secondary victimization.