



Programme Director,
Distinguished Guests,
Government Partners,
Civil Society Champions,
Youth Leaders

Sanibonani

We gather here in Durban under a theme that speaks not only to our moment, but to our moral responsibility: “Unity to End Digital Violence Against All Women and Girls.” KwaZulu-Natal is a province of resilience and strength - yet it is also a place where young women and girls continue to face some of the highest levels of violence, both online and offline.

Today, violence has evolved. It no longer hides only in dark corners or behind closed doors. It follows our young people into their phones, their timelines, their WhatsApp groups, their classrooms, their workplaces - and their most private moments.

Digital violence is real violence.
It breaks confidence.
Destroys reputations.
Ends opportunities.
And, far too often, it escalates into physical harm.

Here in KZN, we have seen young girls drop out of school because a private image was leaked. We’ve seen young women blackmailed on social media by partners. We’ve heard stories of queer youth in Pietermaritzburg being digitally outed and threatened. We’ve seen young boys groomed online with no safe place to report.

Digital GBV includes:

- cyberbullying,
- non-consensual sharing of images,
- stalking and GPS tracking,
- online harassment,
- revenge porn,
- economic abuse through digital control.

This is the new frontline. This is why we are here.

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The National Youth Development Agency stands here guided by a clear mandate rooted in numerous frameworks and policies - and our responsibility under the NYDA Act to protect, empower, and develop the youth of South Africa.

These frameworks do not only speak to economic empowerment - they demand a youth-centred, rights-based approach to safety, digital inclusion, and social justice.

I'd like for us to go beyond awareness this morning, and speak about what the NYDA *does*, every day, to protect young people, especially young women and girls, from violence both online and offline.

1) Digital Literacy & Online Safety Training

Guided by the NYDA Strategic Plan & BRICS Youth Digital Framework
NYDA trains young people on:

- digital consent and online boundaries,
- identifying threats and reporting abuse,
- protecting personal information under POPIA,
- cyberbullying prevention,
- safe use of social media platforms,
- and secure digital communication.

Digital empowerment is protection. A young woman who understands her digital rights is harder to exploit.

2) Psychosocial Support & GBV Survivors' Pathways

Aligned to the GBVF NSP's survivor-centred approach
NYDA youth workers and partners provide:

- trauma support referrals,
- safe-reporting pathways,
- crisis intervention,
- linkage to shelters and social workers,
- and mental-health support.

Because digital harm leaves deep emotional wounds - and no survivor should suffer alone.

3) The NYDA Grant Programme - A Lifeline for Survivors

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Supporting economic independence as required in the GBVF NSP When young women face digital blackmail, reputation damage, or economic control by abusive partners, NYDA grants offer a new beginning.

These grants help survivors:

- start businesses,
- rebuild their reputations,
- escape unsafe homes,
- and regain financial independence.

A financially empowered survivor is a safer survivor.

4) Skills Development for the Digital Era

Aligned to the NYDA Strategic Plan & NEMISA/MICT SETA partnerships
NYDA equips young people with:

- ICT skills,
- coding and software development training,
- digital media production,
- e-commerce skills,
- and tech entrepreneurship support.

These skills turn digital spaces from sites of harm into sites of income, leadership, and confidence. When young women lead in digital spaces, they reshape them.

This province holds both the pain and the solutions. We have seen KZN youth create digital-safety clubs, tech innovators building reporting apps, queer youth forming safe spaces, and girls using digital tools for empowerment and activism.

KZN is ready not only to fight digital violence - but to transform how the nation responds to it.

5. A Call to Unity

Our theme reminds us: unity is not symbolic.

Unity is action.

Unity is accountability.

Unity is choosing to protect - not to ignore.

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Ending digital violence requires:

- families who listen,
- institutions that respond,
- young men who refuse to be silent,
- communities that stand with survivors,
- and youth who use technology responsibly and powerfully.

We cannot hashtag our way out of this crisis.

We cannot workshop our way out.

We must act - together.

To every young woman or girl who has ever been exposed, humiliated, controlled, stalked, or silenced online - we see you.

You deserve safety.

You deserve dignity.

You deserve justice - on your screen and in your life.

Let us honour you not only with empathy, but with action.

Let us build a South Africa where digital spaces uplift women and girls, instead of violating them.

Where unity becomes protection.

Where protection becomes justice.

And where justice becomes healing.

Enough. Is. Enough.

Thank you.