

**MESSAGE BY THE
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Mrs Marie-Pierre Lloyd**

16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence 2008

Once again we come to this time of year marked by many important internationally commemorated human rights related days which are enveloped in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign celebrated from 25th November to 10th December. This year's commemoration holds special significance, as it coincides with the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This is a historic moment, recognizing the past six decades of work to secure the conventions and treaties that make up the human rights framework.

Human rights advocates are seeking to reclaim the universal principles in the Human Rights Declaration; that *Every Human Has Rights*. In support of this message the 2008 16 Days campaign wishes to affirm that human rights cannot be universal without human rights for women, through its annual theme message "Human rights for Women – Human Rights for All: UDHR60".

In Seychelles our national annual theme has also been linked to the 60th anniversary of the UDHR, *Our Constitution, the Voice of Our Nation*, this national instrument which enshrines many of the same rights. It is timely then that our focus for this year's 16 Days Campaign targets the prevailing form of gender discrimination and constitutional rights abuse of our time, *domestic violence*. This campaign focus will not only help to reinforce awareness of the extent, causes and consequences of the problem but also to publicise the past strides made by the Government and its partners towards alleviating gender based violence and facilitating gender equality and equity.

Today I am proud to say that Seychelles stands at the forefront of gender advocacy for our region. Equal access to education, employment, and health care has long been established. Women constitute 29% of the cabinet of ministers and 42% of Principal Secretaries. In the latest United Nations Human Development Report 2007/2008, Seychelles was ranked 50th and featured amongst countries with a high human development ranking.

These achievements did not happen by accident but it was through a concerted and committed effort by Government to ensure that equality is a reality for all. This is evident in our Constitution and many of our domestic laws, which guarantees the human rights of our women, men and children. More specifically this year my ministry officially launched the National Strategy on Domestic Violence, which is aimed at strengthening and synthesising the activities of all the main service providers for an integrated approach which focuses on both efficient short-term response and effective long-term prevention.

A website for the Gender Secretariat (www.genderseychelles.gov.sc) a unit within my ministry that is mandated to address gender concerns was also launched this year, to help bring this small office on-line and into the twenty first century, connecting directly into the homes and offices of its target audiences and its worldwide network of partners and stakeholders. I welcome you to

visit this site to find out more about gender empowerment and the work of Government and its partners.

In this context, it is especially vital that in Government's move toward new approaches and directions starting with the macroeconomic reform, that we ensure we work to maintain and protect what we have worked hard to accomplish. Let us remember that in times of hardship and adversity, it is families, the fundamental element of societies that take the brunt of the economic pressures. It is also within families that we can build the resilience to face pressures and adversity. Family members must unite, be strong together, make the necessary adjustments, reprioritise, and above all care for and love each other.

Let us all be strong and during the 16 days work in solidarity to promote peace and harmony, within our families and within our country.