

SPEECH BY THE MEC FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MS CANDITH MASHEGO - DLAMINI DELIVERED AT THE MEDIA LAUNCH OF THE 2013 CHILD PROTECTION WEEK ON TUESDAY, 28 MAY 2013 AT MATAFFIN WOOD HOUSE COMMUNITY CENTRE.

Head of Department of Social Development, Ms NL Mlangeni

Management and staff of the Department

General Manager Corporate Services Mrs. Matsane S.A on behalf of the Regional Executive Manager of SASSA, Mr M Mogane and Management of the Agency

Provincial Manager of the National Development Agency, Mr M Mathebula and Management of the Agency

Other stakeholders

Esteemed guests

Members of the media

The Child Protection Week held annually since 1998 under the leadership of the Department of Social Development seeks to educate and mobilize communities to put children first. This year the Child Protection Week will commence on the 27th of May and run until the 02nd of June 2013. The concept of Child Protection Week stems from the African proverb, “it takes a village to raise a child”, which emphasizes the role of the wider community in keeping children safe.

The South African society is plagued by high levels of violence and it is no surprise that children also face a substantial amount of violent experiences in their lives. Exposure to violence and a host of abuses are experienced by children across multiple- and virtually all- settings where childhood is spent. These settings include the home and family, schools, care and justice systems, places of work as well as in the community. The high amount of violence exposure across a number of contexts has major implications for children’s

psychological, emotional and social development and their well-being. These consequences are known to continue well into adulthood. Thus, violence against children is not just a children's rights issue but is also a major public concern.

Government has introduced a number of programmes and measures to protect children from vulnerability and exploitation. The focus of government is to ensure protection and empowerment of vulnerable children including children with disabilities and chronic illnesses, who are confronted with the challenges of poverty, disintegration of the family structure and strong sense of community, loss of support systems, exposing them to child abuse, neglect, exploitation. This commitment is reflected in the national theme: ***“Working together to protect Children”*** and the Green Ribbon, symbolizing life, growth, hope, care and support.

Reports from Crime Research and Statistics within South African Police Service (SAPS) indicate that there has been a steady decline in the number of children who are reported to be neglected which currently stands at 139 in 2010/11 compared to 309 in the 2003/04 financial year. However, there has been sharp increase in the same period in the number of Reports from Crime Research and Statistics within South African Police Service (SAPS) (Figure 1) violent crimes committed against children. In 2010/11 the number of crimes committed against children in the Province was 3416.

In 2012/13 we recorded a total of 978 cases of alleged abuse against children in the provincial Child protection Register which is maintained by the Department of Social Development. These figures are a clear indication of the mammoth task that we have at hand to fight the scourge of abuse committed against children.

The child Protection week therefore presents us with an opportunity to highlight these challenges and to conscientize individuals, families and communities on the our collective responsibility in protecting children.

CHILD PROTECTION

Both the Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005) and the National Policy Framework and Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Management of Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation, advocate for a coordinated and integrated approach by all government departments and civil society organizations to maximize efficient utilization of resources and enhance an effective response system for child victims and those at risk of abuse. We are therefore launching the Child protection Week not as Social Development but as Mpumalanga Government because we believe that we need to work together to protect the children of this province and any other child who finds himself or herself here.

Child Protection Week (CPW)

The Government believes that protecting children and creating a safe and secure environment is everybody's responsibility. The focus of the CPW 2013 will be on sensitising communities and families about children's rights, including children with disabilities throughout the country and also emphasizing on measures to prevent the abuse of children.

The Child Protection Register (CPR)

As a province we are recording all cases of abuse or alleged abuse of children in the child protection register. In this regard we have employed a coordinator in each district to monitor and ensure that proper records of all children who are abused are kept for proper follow up and support. In the last financial year we recorded a total of 978 cases of abuse of children in the register. These figures indicate to us that there is still a lot to be done in creating safety nets against abuse of children and we will therefore continue this year raising awareness to ensure that these figures go down.

Early Childhood Development

The Children's Act, Act No. 38 of 2005, regulates the establishment, registration and management of the ECD centres. ECD is an integrated and comprehensive programme that requires participation and involvement of different Government Departments, key being

Departments of Education and Health, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Private Sector, as stipulated in the Children's Act. It is against this background that as a province we developed an integrated ECD plan that looks at the rollout of comprehensive ECD services. We believe that by intensifying ECD services we are actually making an investment which we hope will give us returns when these children matriculate. It is also important to note that we are not yet where we want to be as a province and this is reflected by the number of children who are accessing ECD services compared to the number of children in the 0-6 age cohort. In order to address this, we have undertaken a baseline study that looked at where we are as a province in relation to the following indicators:

- Children accessing ECD services and care in the Province
- ECD Centres' registration status;
- ECD Centre funding status
- Access to ECD services by 0-4 years and funding status
- Access to ECD services by 5-6 years and funding status
- Locations of ECD Centres;
- Types and conditions of buildings used as ECD Centres;
- Types of security facilities;
- Sources of water supply;
- Types and conditions of toilet facilities;
- Allocation of classes;
- Qualifications of ECD Practitioners.
- Ownership of the facilities.

The 2012/13 baseline survey undertaken by the department indicates that only **88 933** of the **619 693** children have access to ECD services. And yes, the harsh reality is that despite the positive developments, many qualifying children do not have access to Early childhood Development (ECD).

The findings of the baseline study will indeed help us to plan further on how we can ensure access to these children.

It is worth noting that in the past financial year amid the financial constraints that we had, a total of **65 968** children benefitted in the ECD centres that were funded at R12 per child per day.

This year we are going increase subsidy to **R15** per child per day. We have also realized that there are many children that cannot access ECD centres and therefore have resolved to implement 5 non centre based ECD services that would target children who cannot access ECD centres in the following areas.

- Mkhondo
- Nkomazi
- Bushbuckridge
- Dr JS Moroka
- Emalahleni

The total budget that we have set aside for ECD services this financial year is **R186,546** million.

Foster care

Foster care continues to be one of the key programmes that is critical in fighting child poverty and creating a safety net for vulnerable children in need of care and protection as it keeps the child within his/her family of origin or within the community.

This year we have developed a plan to fast-track the placement of children in foster care and in this regards we are doing an analysis of the areas where there is a greatest need for such placement and our strategy will therefore focus on such areas.

We are planning to place a total number of **8 808** children in foster care this year. We have also realized that we need to keep close contact with these children to monitor their progress and identify challenges that they might experience and we will therefore develop individual development plans for each child based on the child's specific needs.

As we launch the CPW a number of activities are taking place in the province both by DSD, other departments NPO's and civil society. The message that we are all communicating is that **We need to work together to protect children** We will also hold a children's day

event to celebrate the International Children's day which takes place annually on the 1st of June. As a province we will celebrate this day on the 8th of June 2013 where we will be visiting Child and Youth Care Centres as well as stimulation centres for children with disabilities.

I call upon every one especially families to make extra effort in protecting our children because they are our future.