

FOR THE LOVE OF LITTLE CHILDREN

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MINISTER of Social Development Bathabile Dlamini has promised to build an Early Childhood Development centre in Qwaqwa in October this year.



TOP LEVEL: Ministers Lulu Xingwana, left, and Bathabile Dlamini, centre, and Free State social development MEC Sisi Ntombela, right, pose with pupils during a visit to Qwaqwa. Photo: Ntwaagae Seleka

Dlamini made the promise after visiting at a child-headed family and an unregistered daycare centre yesterday in Slovo Park in Qwaqwa, Free State.

Dlamini was accompanied on the visit by Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities Lulu Xingwana, MEC for social development in the province Sisi Ntombela and other government officials. The visits were part of the closing of the Child Protection Week.

Resident Matsamaelo Mokoena told Dlamini she was looking after 30 children at her home on a daily basis. She started the daycare centre four years ago.

"I was a caregiver in the area when I decided to form this daycare centre. I was visiting a very sick woman who was living with her two-year-old child. The child was not being taken care of," she said.

"I adopted the child and took her to my house. Later people brought their children to my house."

She said most of the people who brought their children were school-going young women.

"They would bring them here on weekends and later pick them up either on a Monday or Tuesday. These children survived on milk from my cows and vegetables from my garden," she said.

Mokoena said the creche was not registered with the department.

She said she also provided food and care to two orphaned siblings aged nine and 17.

Dlamini promised that the centre would start operating in October. The department was also going to employ about 10000 youth care-givers in the country.

She lambasted social workers who were not doing their work.

"I have visited child-headed families in the country. It is embarrassing that social workers only attend to them when we are coming. Social work is a calling. We need to retrain social workers and they should have a conscience," Dlamini said.

She said last year 68 people in the province were convicted in child abuse cases.

Dlamini also attacked mothers who were misusing child grants.

"We need a strong mechanism to monitor grants. If we don't do that many of our children will drop out of school," Dlamini said.

Xingwana encouraged communities and civil societies to look after children. -
ntwagaes@sowetan.co.za

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