

The Weekly

WOMEN AND CHILDREN STILL VULNERABLE TO ABUSE

November 30, 2012 |



Extending helping han ... MEC for Social Development Sisi Ntombela made a call to society to protect women and children against abuse

Statistics have showed that women killed by their partners increased between 1999 and 2009

The MEC for Social Development, Sisi Ntombela made a call for protection of women and children during the launch of 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children in Kroonstad earlier this week.

This campaign is meant to raise awareness on the predicament facing these vulnerable groups.

According to the Medical Research Council (MRC), a woman is killed every eight hours in South Africa.

Recent crime statistics released by the police revealed that 64 514 sexual offences were reported between April 2011 and May 2012.

The MRC findings also stated that the proportion of women killed by their husbands, boyfriends or same-sex partners rose from 50.3 percent in 1999 to 57.7 percent in 2009.

Recent findings by Help Centre Rape Crisis showed that is not unusual for two members of the same family to be raped in South Africa. This meant that a mother and her daughter can both be victims of rape.

Ntombela said women have had enough of abuse, rape and murder of fellow women and children.

“Sometimes talking about abuse without mentioning its impact is meaningless. In Kroostad, as we were preparing for this campaign, a two months pregnant woman was stoned to death because she had tried to help another abused woman. The abuser grabbed her on the street as she was walking home from a wedding.”

“He stoned her until she could not move. She was a mother of three young children. How can things like this happen in our communities? We must take a stand against this violence and protect our women and children,” said Ntombela.

Basic education minister and ANC Women’s League president, Angie Motshekga, underlined the need for women and children to be protected at all times.

“While we applaud this initiative of our government and believe this campaign brings much-needed attention to the crisis of violence that our women and children are facing, we stick to our stance that 16 days are not enough to focus on the prevention of gender-based violence; it should be a 365-day campaign.

Our women and children are under threat from rapists and abusers and live under constant fear of being attacked. If we are serious about this campaign we will dedicate more than 16 days,” said Motshekga.

Abuse and neglect force children to seek refuge on the streets, where they become vulnerable to other hazards like sexual assaults.

Due to surging unemployment rates, women and children face domestic violence, which is sometimes blamed on the anxiety caused by joblessness.

Anna Kegomoditswe (18) lives in an orphanage. She does not know where her parents are, but what she does remember is moving from one family to another because she had nowhere to go. She had to live in school when she was in high school because she could no longer bear the abuse from people who gave her shelter.

“I never knew the love of a parent because I was raised in different homes. These people who offered to care for me abused me repeatedly. I cannot call them foster homes because they would just take me in and do as they pleased with me.”

“But in my final high school year I was introduced to a woman who cared for orphans and abused children. My life has changed since then; I was aggressive and filled with anger. I finished my matric and now I am looking forward to studying social work,” Kegomoditswe sobbed.

The woman who took Kegomoditswe in is Mamorena Taje of Kroostad. She started a children’s shelter in 1991 after a three-month old baby boy was left on her door step.

She now cares for 18 sexually, physically and mentally abused children. Six of them are old enough to help out with household chores and taking care of the younger ones.

“We are one big family and I treat them like my own children. I have three children of my own, but they are all treated the same. Some of my adopted children are now in different levels of schooling: high schools, colleges and universities. They are all my children,” said Taje.

The departments of social development and human settlement will work together to build a shelter for these children and provide them with daily necessities.

Women who shared their experiences on the day were survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Some were women offenders from a female prison in Kroonstad, who are doing time for killing their abusive husbands.

The Weekly

Youth to discuss their own challenges

November 30, 2012 |

The South African youth will gather in the Free State for week-long National Youth Camp, to foster good relation amongst themselves and discuss their own development and challenges.

According to the department of social development, one of the key outcomes of the camp is to encourage young people to establish youth clubs throughout the country and to champion youth-led development initiatives. The minister of social development, Bathabile Dlamini, will officially open this camp.

The challenges faced by young people in the country includes; HIV and AIDS, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, substance and alcohol abuse.

During the opening of the youth centre in Tweeling recently, Dlamini said there is a need to take stock of the challenges and opportunities that young people encounter. She said this can help in formulating strategies and practical initiatives that will empower young people.

“Our government is implementing a number of initiatives for the empowerment of our youth. The main objective is to amongst others, develop positive bonds amongst young people, promote tolerance, social inclusion and respect for diversity, as well as to promote young people’s civic engagement and active citizenship.”

The National Youth Camp is the department of social development’s initiative to “bring together” young people from all provinces under the theme: Youth Working Together in Diversity. Over 500 young people will participate in this Camp.

The department’s goal is to interact with young people as “active and reflective citizens” of this country. It will also provide a forum for joint reflection and dialogue among young people and policy makers.

Government has already implemented a number programmes for empowerment of young people. These initiatives include the National Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC); National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS); Youth Build Project; Masupatsela Youth Pioneer Programme (MYPP); learnership and internship programmes.

All these initiatives are designed to give youth leadership and entrepreneur skills. These expertise will then enable them to participate in economic activities and play a meaningful role in building the desired society.

This camp will follow the accredited MYPP curriculum and focus on other pertinent issues, such as sex and reproductive health rights, substance abuse, peer pressure, and youth unemployment.

The MYPP was officially launched in 2008 with main purpose of recruiting and absorbing unemployed and out of school youth. These young people were recruited from their own communities and they were tasked to serve them.

“The programme is based on the general conduct of young people in Cuba. This is the kind of youth that do not care about drug abuse and money but committed on serving their people.

It is also based on old South African youth during Apartheid and we wanted to revive that spirit of patriotism, self-discipline, dedication and commitment. These Camps will be based on these values and ethics of the Masupatsela,” said senior youth leader in the social development department, Bongo Nazo.

The provincial department of social development trained 347 Masupatsela pioneers; eleven of them received bursaries to study further, and seven are studying to become social workers at the Stellenbosch University. The rest were absorbed within the department and now working as government officials.

Government departments and entities including the National Development Agency (NDA); departments of defence and military veterans, basic education, as well as higher education will participate in the programme and present various packages on issues affecting youth.

The Camp will be in Bloemfontein from December 2 to 7.

The Weekly

YOUTH ATTEND MASUPATSELA CAMP

December 7, 2012 |

The national department of social development will wind up its youth camp which started on Sunday, in Bloemfontein today.

The National Youth Camp, which was held at the Die Brug Military Camp, was aimed at revitalising the spirit of youth activism and patriotism. It is the department's flagship programme where it facilitates the recruitment, training and absorption of unemployed and out of school youth of South Africa.

The department's spokesperson in the Northern Cape, Conrad Fortune, told The Weekly on Thursday that the youth camp was a joint initiative of various government departments, such as the department of defence.

He further indicated that a total of 500 youth across the country, between the ages of 17 and 24, have been taking part in the camp; 51 of whom are from the Northern Cape.

According to Fortune, the youth camp follows the provincial youth dialogues which were held around the country earlier this year.

He said the main issues discussed at the dialogues were: school dropouts, sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancy, intergenerational sex, substance abuse, low self-esteem, moral degeneration, lack of positive role-models and lack of employment opportunities

The primary objectives of the youth camp was to develop positive bonds among young people, promote tolerance, social inclusion and respect for diversity, promote young people's civic engagement and encourage their contribution to their respective communities.

It was also aimed at open up channels of participation for young people and involves them in the national discussion and debate about issues affecting them; to identify, promote and celebrate youth-led initiatives, such as youth clubs, and hear from young people and seek their views on the difficulties young people from diverse backgrounds are experiencing.

Social development minister, Bathabile Dlamini, said the camp was important because it gives the government insight into the challenges facing the country's youth.

"The youth are recruited from and serve in their local communities. Through this programme we seek to address the challenges facing South Africa's youthful population by utilising them as development resources or agents of change.

“This is part of our contribution to the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality (as) identified by President Jacob Zuma in the state of the nation address early this year. This is also important in the context of the Integrated Youth Development Strategy and Plan (2012-2016), which identify youth development as an urgent priority,” said Dlamini.

“Dlamini said the initiative will further provide a safe space for young people, from different communities, to learn together; share their experiences and to enhance their leadership skills.

“It will also focus on other areas such as youth leadership, decision making, substance abuse, sexual and reproductive health issues and volunteerism, to name a few,” added Dlamini.

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Tweeling Youth Centre to create jobs

November 16, 2012 |



Youth development partnership ... Social development minister, Bathabile Dlamini and Free State department of social development, Sisi Ntombela, open the centre

The centre will cater for about 17 000 youth in Tweeling, the majority of whom are unemployed and unskilled

The minister of social development, Bathabile Dlamini, and the MEC for social development, Sisi Ntombela, opened a Youth Centre in Tweeling last week.

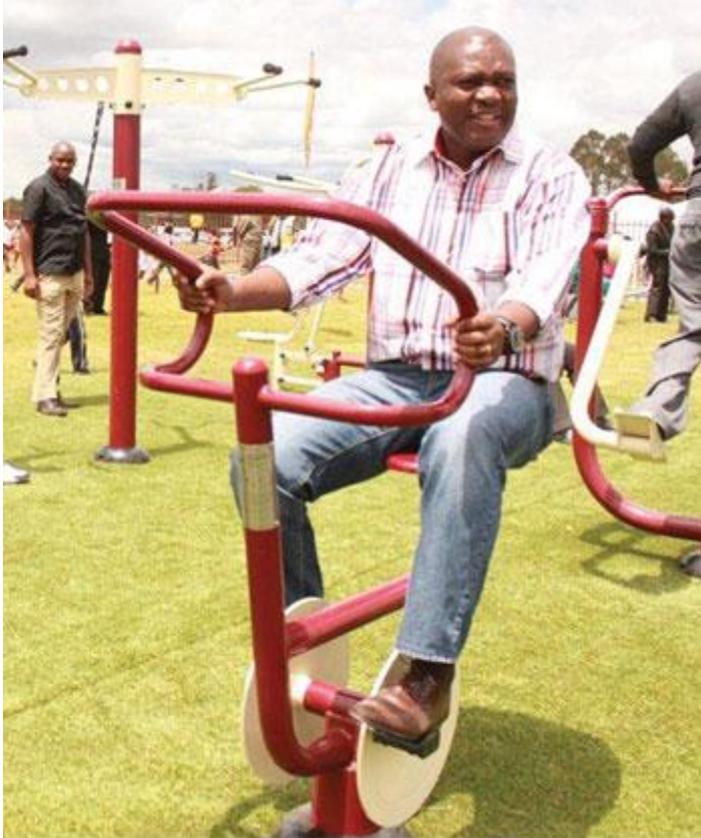
The new centre is expected to address the high levels of unemployment in the area. It is a multi-purpose facility that will provide training and skills development, community service, sports and recreation, information technology and government services.

It will cater for about 17 000 youth in Tweeling; the majority of whom are unemployed and unskilled.

The idea of a youth centre started out with a group of 13 young people who were brought together by a desire to change their lives. They received training under the child and youth

care learnership programme in 2010, after which they conceived an idea of setting up a youth centre.

Dlamini commended the vision of the centre, stating that it would create an environment for that will be conducive for young people to discover and hone their talents.



Keeping youth fit ... The centre boasts exercising machines to be used by youth

“Young people need to be encouraged to develop into responsible and productive citizens, so it is our hope that this centre will help them take advantage of opportunities created by our government, and translate them into a life of productivity.”

She said the centre will keep the youth in the area away from drugs and peer pressure.

“I believe that this (centre) will keep the youth off the streets and negative risky behaviour. This centre is an exciting example of a government that cherishes young people and understands the necessity to encourage them to become active participants in society. We hope other provinces will learn from this positive initiative.”

The centre’s board chairperson, Tshepo Mofokeng, thanked the provincial government for building the centre in the community.

“Most of us were unemployed, but because of this centre, we will be able to generate some income. We do not have a tertiary education and two of the 13 members of the board had actually failed their Grade 12. Life can be very difficult for a young person if you do not have the skills that the job market needs.

“But our government has stepped in and made us feel very important and valued. Running the centre will equip us with skills such as project and financial management. This will enable us to use the centre for the benefit of our community and our families,” Mofokeng told The Weekly.

He also revealed that the provincial social development department had funded the youth with over R200 000 to run the centre.

For her part, Ntombela was confident that the youth centre will have a lasting and positive effect on the young people.

“We built this centre to help curb the challenges of unemployment, teenage pregnancies and drug abuse that are rife in the area. We hope the young people of this area use it wisely. Young people are the future of this country and we must invest in them,” she said.

The Weekly

Early Childhood Development prioritised

November 2, 2012 |



Equipped for learning....ECD centres opened in Mohokare to accommodate children from poor households

The MEC for social development, Sisi Ntombela handed an early childhood development (ECD) centre over to the Rouxville community, this week, in line with her department's plans to open several more ECD's in the many under-privileged communities throughout the province.

Children constitute 30 percent of the Free State's population and, earlier this year, Ntombela outlined her department's plans to renovate, build and fund ECD centres in the province to cater for vulnerable children.

"We promised that we will achieve a brighter future for the children of South Africa and that is what social development is all about. We heard and we also know that our children learn under terrible conditions and we wanted to improve that.

"We have to date built eight ECD centres across the province and now only one will be completed before the end of this year. So far we have invested over a million rand in these centres and we will continue doing more," said Ntombela.

Ntombela was addressing residents of Rouxville's Role lea Thunya township, in the Mohokare Local Municipality, after handing over Empilweni Educare Centre to this community.

This crèche started in 1997 as a child and youth care programme. This was an initiative by the local unemployed women who requested accommodation for the children from the municipality. The executive mayor of the Mohokare Local Municipality, Mando Shasha, was amongst these women.

The women's plan was to provide love and care to the children of the impoverished community.

"When I started this crèche, I asked the ANCWL at that time for help. It was not easy, the challenges we encountered taught us that if you are not stubborn you will not realise your dreams. Now children will have a decent place to learn," said Shasha.

Ntombela and her delegation also paid a visit to the Thusanong Creative Learning Centre. It was established in 2002 as a disability programme, where parents organised themselves and asked the Association for People with Disability (APD) and social workers to help them.

"This place was initially a school for coloureds and the building was later used for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). But, after a while, social development approached us and told us about the need for a child care centre. We then agreed to use this place as a day care centre and separated ABET and the crèche with a fence. There is still enough space for a garden and a youth centre," said Xhariep District Municipality director, Mokuena Woodyatt.

This whole exercise was part of celebrations to mark social development month. The theme for this year's annual celebrations was: Working together to enhance community capacity to fight poverty, unemployment and inequality.

The annual 2012 South African Child Gauge was released last month, revealing the status of children in the country. Though there have been achievements in terms of advancing children's rights, it painted a bleak picture.

In foreword of the report, the minister in the presidency and the head in the national planning omission (NPC), Trevor Manuel, said there is a need "to think hard on how to bring up children".

Manuel said this is because the foundations laid in childhood will stay with them throughout their lives.

"Studies estimate that cognitive development of over 200 million children under the age of five worldwide was held back by poverty, ill health and under-nutrition, and identified early childhood as the most effective and cost efficient time to ensure all children develop their potential."

Child Gauge also found that the majority of poor children live in rural areas, while 80 percent of rich children live in urban areas.

The report also established that over 11 million children receive child support grants and almost 600 000 are on the foster care grants. Some 117 246 children receive the care dependency grant.

In the poorest 20 percent of South African households, almost 70 percent of the income is derived from grants.

Mohokare is one of the smallest and poorest municipalities in the country. Over 98 percent of the residents are considered indigents, meaning they are unemployed and unable to pay for services.

This in turn puts a strain on the municipality to generate revenue and hinders service delivery to a certain extent.

“The funding from government departments into community projects in this area will help a lot. This means more jobs for young people and improved life for children. This will also help in dealing with challenges of alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy,” said a young man from Rouxville, Molefi Soqaka.

However, not all is lost as Shasha said the municipality has been able to pay a large part of their debts. She said the provincial government intervention has also helped the municipality. All the ECD projects were funded by social development in partnership with National Development Agency and department of education

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Dlamini, Ntombela open R1-million ECD centre in QwaQwa

October 5, 2012



Caring for children ... Social development minister, Bathabile Dlamini, officially opened the Lethabong Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre in QwaQwa

The million rand state of the art centre will provide refuge for poor and vulnerable children in the area

The minister of social development, Bathabile Dlamini, accompanied by Free State social development MEC, Sisi Ntombela, opened the R1-million Lethabong Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre in QwaQwa on Wednesday.

This came after the 2012 Social Development Month was launched in the Free State. The month has been designated as a period to interact and reach out to meet citizens, while assessing government's contribution to the improvement of the lives of South Africans.

Dlamini also paid tribute to Clara Mokoena, a grandmother hailing from Qwaqwa who uses her own house to accommodate and take care of children. Mokoena's generosity allows young parents, who live her with their children, to continue with their studies.

According to Dlamini, Mokoena's efforts are an investment in the future of children and their parents as well as the broader community.

"I want to express my sincere and heartfelt "thank you" to her as well as all the other grandparents and community members who are doing similar work."

She said more than R1-million was spent on construction of the facility, with an additional R190 000 donated by the Free State department of social development for the paving, fencing, lawns and equipment.

The department of correctional services volunteered to assist with the building of the centre. The facility has created employment for a single manager; four ECD practitioners and cooking and cleaning staff.

Dlamini said the provincial department in partnership with the National Development Agency (NDA) allocated R7.5-million for the reconstruction of seven facilities and the renovation of four others.

"We are proud to announce that nine of these facilities were completed. The second facility that is still under construction is being erected here in QwaQwa in collaboration with the NDA. It is a drop-in centre, which will cater for children in need of care and protection in Slovo Park."

The provincial department of social development has allocated R1.9-million towards the building of the drop-in centre expected to be completed in the next four weeks.

The centre will be named after Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, to honour and applaud her following her new appointment as chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC).

According to Dlamini, this was one to honour the contribution Dlamini-Zuma in the fight against apartheid and the revival of Africa.

The minister said government was committed reducing high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

"An important component of that strategy is to improve household food security so that all South Africans have access to nutritious food. Our strategy is integrated in that it seeks to support families and help small farmers improve their capacity to produce food to feed the nation," she said.

Dlamini said the strategy included efforts to lower the prices of essential foods and improving access to social assistance measures, such as grants and food distribution programmes. "To reduce poverty and associated challenges, the department of social development works with its provincial counterparts, agencies as well as with non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs)."

“It is only through structured and committed partnerships that we can successfully implement our mandate which is to improve the lives of all South Africans,” she said

The Weekly

CALL TO CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

October 5, 2012 | Filed



Enjoying her retirement ... Selina Mellisi is happy with the living conditions and the company she enjoys at the Boikhuco old age home in Mangaung

Abandoned by their children and families, elderly people often find refuge in government owned or subsidised old age homes where they get provided with food, medical care and education.

Society's continued neglect of the aged, which leaves them exposed to dangers like abuse, rape and harassment, has prompted the Free State MEC for social development, Sisi Ntombela, to appeal for conscientious efforts to protect elderly people.

Ntombela was speaking in an interview with The Weekly in the wake of the International Day for Older Persons on Monday.

Globally, there are 600 million people who are aged 60 and above, and this number is expected to double by 2015. According to projections, the figure will reach two billion by 2050.

“We are worried and we call on our communities to care for our old people. These are the people who fought for our freedom and instilled good values in us. They still continue to care for our children especially HIV/AIDS orphans. They use their pension money to ensure their vulnerable and needy grand-children are cared for,” said Ntombela.

She also encouraged old people to join Older Persons Forums.

Some of the challenges faced by old persons are access to proper information and shortage of personnel in home-based care centres. Most elderly people in South Africa use their State pensions to care for their children and grand children. In most cases, the meagre pensions are not enough to address the huge needs of their families.

In need of more financial back-up, old people usually turn to loan sharks who harass them if they do not pay them back. Most of them do not know where to turn to for help and have no knowledge of their rights.

“My pension money is sometimes not enough to care for my family, which consists of my children and four grand-children. This is too much but I have to soldier on; it is my responsibility,” said the 83-year-old Mmakgotso Molehe from Botshabelo.

To compliment her pension money she rummages through dumpsites for ‘valuables’ that she can in turn sell. About 2 400 old people are taken care of by non-government organizations.(NGO’s) owned old age homes while 138 live in government-funded institutions in the Free State.

One of these old age homes is Boikhuco Old Age Home in Bloemfontein’s Bochabela Township, which takes care of 80 old people. They are provided with basic needs such as food, shelter, security, health care and education.

Selina Mellisi (79) is one of the people enjoying the safety and care, courtesy of government funding.

She said her five children had abandoned her and did not take care of her prior to coming to Boikhuco. She praised the old age home for taking good care of her and fellow pensioners.

She advised young people to respect their elders in order to live long and fulfilling lives.

“The reason I am still alive today and will continue to live longer is that I respected my parents. This is not the case these days; young people do as they please because they think they know better.

If they make an effort to learn from us, I can assure you they will be better people,” Mellisi told The Weekly.

Auxiliary social worker, Monique Khechane, who has worked at Boikhuco Old Age Home since 2007, said she appreciated and respected the wealth of wisdom old people have.

Khechane said the advice she receives from the elderly in the old age home helps her overcome some of the challenges she comes across in her own life.

“I enjoy working with them because they have a lot of wisdom. They demand you be patient with them because they are easily offended. The best advice I ever received is to respect my parents, and this has helped me achieve my goals. They have become my best friends and I have learned a lot from with them.”

She said elderly people need helpers who are patient, because they are fragile due to illnesses.

“Some of them have illnesses that make them forgetful. I have learnt to just laugh it off and make the situation bearable for them.”

One of the conditions that are common among old people is dementia, which is a progressive deterioration of intellectual functions such as the memory, while other brain functions such as controlling movement and senses are retained.

South Africa passed the Older Persons Act in 2006, which promotes the status, well-being, safety and security of older persons. It also recognises their skills and wisdom and promotes their participation.



Caring for elders ... Auxiliary Social Worker, Monique Khechane enjoys assisting and educating older people



Protecting the elderly ... Social Development MEC, Sisi Ntombela, has vowed to ensure that government continues to support elderly people

OLDER PERSONS ACT, NO. 13 OF 2006

The Act aims to do five things:

- To maintain and promote the *status, wellbeing, safety* and security of older persons,
- To maintain and protect the *rights* of older persons,
- To help older persons to stay in *their homes* in the community for as long as possible,
- To *regulate services* and residential facilities for older persons, and
- To *combat abuse* of older persons.

Rights of Older Persons

As stated in section 9 of the Constitution, older persons have the right to:

- Participate in community life in any appropriate position,
- Take part in inter-generational programmes,
- Set up and participate in structures and associations for older persons,
- Live in an environment suitable to their changing abilities, and
- Access opportunities that promote their social, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

