

The Weekly

WOMEN AND CHILDREN STILL VULNERABLE TO ABUSE

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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 Kroonstad, 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.

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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.

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