



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, Ms NANDI NDALANE ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF CHILD PROTECTION WEEK HELD AT LOSKOP RUGBY CLUB HALL, ON 30 MAY 2023.

**THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, Cllr MALEKE MOKGANYETSI
IN ABSENTIA**

OUR ESTEEMED TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

SENIOR MANAGEMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

REPRESENTATIVES FROM SISTER DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND JUSTICE

REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE SAPS

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS PRESENT HERE

VARIOUS NPOS AND CBOS DEALING WITH CHILD SERVICES

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

OUR SPECIAL BEATIFUL CHILDREN

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

GOOD MORNING!

I would like to extend our warmest regards to all of you on this special occasion as we launch Child Protection week. As you all may be aware Child protection week's fundamental objective is to raise awareness of the rights of children as clearly articulated in the children's Act of 2005.

Children of our country live in a society with a constitution that has the highest regards for their rights and for the equality and dignity of everyone. Over and above the children's rights this week is further critically important in raising awareness about child abuse, neglect and exploitation and highlighting the importance of safeguarding our children.

Protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse is not only a basic value, but also an obligation clearly set out in article 28 of the South African constitution.

Programme Directors

Reducing the high levels of violence against children is among our country's most overwhelming tasks. We are saying this against the concerning high levels of violence against our children. In our province a total of 672 cases of child abuse and neglect were reported on the national child protection register for the 2022/2023 financial year. In the same vein a total of 383 incidences of child neglect were reported across districts with Waterberg reporting the highest number with 106 cases. Sekhukhune reported 93 cases, Mopani 78 cases, followed by the Capricorn district with 76 cases while Vhembe reported 30 cases. All of us gathered here should frown upon these cases as they are not only unacceptably high but paint a scary picture about the welfare and safety of our children. These cases should worry all of us gathered here. Our children are victims of neglect and abuse and what does that say about us, who have been given a responsibility to protect and nurture them. What kind of society are we which attacks its children. What future are we building when our children who carry the future of our country are victims of violence and savage? These statistics are staggering, and we should all be up in arms and say not on our watch.

Programme Directors

While child neglect and abuse are not enough our children are further subjected to deplorable sexual abuse. This form of abuse is the second largest with a total of 165 cases reported after neglect and abuse. Capricorn district has the highest incidences with 65 cases reported followed by Vhembe with 51 then Waterberg with 23 cases, Sekhukhune with 20 cases, and Mopani with 6 cases. I want to repeat that if you look at the cases of sexual abuse against our children this categorically makes us a sad and deplorable society which is at war with its children.

What kind of society are we becoming which mercilessly sexually attacks its children. It is wrong and deplorable. We need to take a stand now against any form of abuse against our children. I'm making an impassioned plea to each one of you that let this child protection week add much needed value in raising awareness against these heinous acts of criminality. Let us use this week to expose those in our communities who are behind these acts of criminality against our children. Let us not protect those who attack our children, we need to report them to the law enforcement agencies so that they can face the full might of the law. It is in our hands. By protecting these criminals, we will be aiding and abetting the attack of our children in our communities. I trust that each one of us gathered here will actively help in exposing those who are the enemies of our children and importantly protect our future leaders in our society.

Programme Directors

The focus of child protection week this year is on children's online safety. The survey research conducted by the national department of Social Development has revealed that online abuse is a new dimension of child abuse and violence. It includes amongst others cyberbullying, grooming, recording, and sharing in person violence and sexually explicit images.

All of us gathered here can all agree that internet has become an essential part of life, but it has opened the possibility for children to be exposed to harmful content and to interact with strangers who may harm them.

In recent times we have seen increased number of videos which go viral involving children found in compromising situations. Internet can be a useful resource to help in academic programmes, however, it has become clear that some of our children use this important resource for the purpose for which it was not meant for. At the same time our children fall victims to strangers who target them using the internet for their own nefarious objectives. It is therefore critically important that as parents we recognize the importance of the use of internet as well as its potential dangers.

Parents and guardians should educate their children on the importance of being careful on the internet and to avoid sharing personal information with strangers. Additionally, schools could have programs that teach children about online safety and the dangers that come with interacting with strangers on the internet.

Programme Directors

We can all accept that the internet is here to stay in fact the reality is each year or as life evolves, we continually observe the improvement of this resource. Therefore, we need to be vigilant so that our children do not become perpetual victims of the internet. I urge parents and guardians to actively ensure that their children are safe as they engage with technology. Parents can employ parental control features which will enable them to control and monitor their children's internet usage and filter tools that can block offensive or age –inappropriate content. Overall, a collaborative effort from parents, schools, government agencies and technology companies are needed to ensure that children in our country are safe when using the internet.

Programme Directors

Let us renew our commitment to protecting our children and improving their lives. Let us raise our voices to advocate for their rights and call on all of us to work together to prevent child abuse and neglect. Let us all do our part to make our communities safer for children. Let us be vigilant in recognizing signs of abuse and taking action when we see it. Let us provide a safe and loving environment for our children, where they can grow and thrive. It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a community to protect them. We must work together to prevent child abuse and neglect from happening, and to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Kea Leboga