

Media Statement

CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES ON THE LAUNCH OF CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

Newcastle, KZN Province - 28 May 2023: While the Minister of Social Development launched the Child Protection Week campaign highlighting the department's program for orphaned and vulnerable children, Deputy Minister Mme Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu visited children in conflict with the law.

The annual campaign, commemorated under the theme: "Let us Protect Children during COVID-19 and Beyond," the children in conflict with the law - cared for by the department -shared their experiences.

In a difficult and emotional session, the children tried to freely express themselves by sharing their stories. Mandisa* (14) who was visibly remorseful, spoke about how she got arrested for murder on 17 January 2023 for stabbing her boyfriend's ex-girlfriend. "Since committing this crime, my life has been not been the same," said Mandisa* who would like to finish her grade 7 and become a doctor one day.

Sixteen year old Bongani* who was arrested for a rape said that he really felt bad for what he did. "I want to apologise to the girl I raped. What I did is unforgiveable," he expressed.

The KZN Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC), is a facility which accommodates children in conflict with the law. These are children who have committed crimes ranging from schedule 1 to 3.

Deputy Minister Bogopane-Zulu encouraged the children and told them that: "In life, we all make mistakes. Your part is to accept what you have done and forgive yourselves. Do not let this situation define who you are. Through your Child Youth Care Workers, you can request to speak to those you have done wrong and apologise as you reclaim your lives".

This, she said, is part of the Restorative Justice - a theory that focuses on reconciling and reintegrating offenders into society rather than on retribution.

As part of the provision of the child protection system, the Department of Social Development provides care and reintegration services for children in conflict with the law.

In line with the provision of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the Department has established CYCCs which accommodate children in conflict with the law. The CYCCs serve as residential facilities for children awaiting trial, sentencing or those who have been sentenced in terms of the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008.

The Child Protection Week campaign, which is now a 365 day campaign, encourages all sectors of society to care and protect children. It also impresses on the importance of coordinated action needed across a number of fronts to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in South Africa.

Not their real names

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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