

“The business as usual approach will not help protect our children.”

It’s no longer teenage pregnancy but child pregnancy. This is a social challenge that’s facing vulnerable communities like Lusikisiki in Eastern Cape where the department of social development launched child protection week on Sunday. The Ingquza Hill Local Municipality is among the five regions that raised major concern when it was reported that children between the age of 10 and 14 years fell pregnant.

The Department of Health’s National Adolescent and Youth Health Policy said this worrying trend was recorded during the 2021/22 financial year. KwaZulu-Natal recorded the highest number of 269 girls also aged between 10 and 14 years who gave birth.

In her budget speech earlier this month, Minister Lindiwe Zulu said social challenges like child pregnancy needed a community to community, street to street and housing to house approach. On the launch of child protection week in Lusikisiki, deputy minister Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu has been leading in the ongoing attempts to protect children. These efforts will involve all members of this community towards the goal of protecting vulnerable girls.

On Sunday, the deputy minister met with young girls who gave birth, their children, and parents in a session at the Lusikisiki Police Station. The aim of the session was to quiz the young girls’ parents on how the Social Development Department can help close the gaps that allow for young girls to end up pregnant. Deputy minister Bogopane-Zulu urged the young girls not to let their pregnancy compromise their future. All the girls at the session shared what they aspired to be after school. The deputy minister compelled the provincial education representatives present during the session, to ensure there is a conducive environment for children who go back to school after giving birth.