

ADDRESS BY THE ACTING MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, DR. PHOPHI RAMATHUBA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF PROVINCIAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK, TSHILAMBA TOWN HALL.

5th June 2017

Programme Director;

The Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr. Florence Radzilani;

The Mayor of Thulamela Local Municipality, Cllr. T.N Makumbane;

Councillors present here today;

NGOs and formations of men, women and the youth;

Representatives of religious institutions;

Members of the media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

All protocol observed.

Thank you very much for honouring our invitation to come and show your support for the fight against child abuse, neglect and exploitation.

We have come to the end of Child Protection Week. A week in which we aimed to place emphasis on the rights of children and to bring home the message that too many children continue to be abused, most of them by an adult that they know. We have time and again called for the prosecution and harsh punishment for those who make themselves guilty of violence and abuse against children. Now it is up to all of us to ensure that the activities and the strong sentiments of this week are taken to the other 51 weeks of the year.

Programme Director

There are still disturbing reports reaching us regarding child trafficking in especially this district. I have harsh words today for parents gathered here today who have not begun to talk to their children and especially girl children, about the dangers of men luring them from their homes with promises of riches and fame. Our children are so focused on material wealth that they are easily confused and convinced to leave what they know and follow these evil people who have in mind to use and abuse them.

Our smaller children should always feel free to be able to report any abuse against them. We need to ask ourselves and especially those of us who are in authority positions: “will the children that we work with or live with have the trust in us to take us into their confidence about what is happening to them?”. Are we doing enough to ensure that they know they have the right to protect themselves and report any form of abuse?

We are herewith once again urging communities to take a stand against the abuse of children because remember, it takes a village to raise a child and if we ignore the abuse or neglect of a child, we are all guilty.

As the Department we will continue our programmes and projects geared towards creating awareness and assisting children who have fallen victim to abuse or neglect. We will also continue supporting those NPOs who care for destitute or abused children as well as undocumented and separated minors.

The Department takes the care and protection of children seriously, through ongoing programmes and projects such as Isibindi, Drop-In Centres, Child and Youth Care Centres, Children in Conflict with the Law, Foster Care and Adoption, Early Childhood Development and let us not forget our counselling programmes aimed at better parenting and a healthy family unit, that aim to make the family unit one where children can grow and learn without issues of conflict and neglect.

Let us make the year 2017 – the year dedicated to Oliver Reginald Tambo – a year in which we see a drastic reduction in cases of abuse against children and the successful prosecution of child abusers. We can only do it with the help of everyone and if all stakeholders join hands and follow the pledge we have all signed today.

We are closing Child Protection Week, but we are now also in the month of June, during which we celebrate the tenacity of the youth of the uprising of 16th of June 1976. This month will see intensified programmes and activities geared towards the youth. In the process we will be working on the future of this country because that is what our children and the youth are. They are our hope for the future and the leaders that will take this country forward. It is for this reason that we can even take this year's theme well into the future: **“Let us protect our children to take South Africa forward”**.

Let us ensure that we protect our children, today and every other day of the year!

I thank you!

