



MINISTRY OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
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Statement by Minister for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities

Media Launch:

16 Days of Activism on No Violence Against Women and Children

Cape Town
23 November 2010

We are here today to officially announce the launch of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign on No Violence Against Women and Children for 2010.

We are launching this year's Campaign amid a number of incidents that have demonstrated that we have to do more to reverse the scourge of violence against women and children in our country.

We are particularly concerned about the increasing challenges relating to the safety of children. The number of contact crime committed against adult women and children of both genders are of grave concern. The annual SAPS crime statistics indicate increases in cases of attempted murder, murder and sexual offences against children between 2008/09 and 2009/10 financial years. Attempted murder against children increased from 782 to 1 113 and murder from 843 to 965. Most of the crimes have been committed against children between ages of 15-17 years but we are equally concerned that children between 0-10 years are significantly affected by these crimes. In addition, child welfare organizations are reporting an increase in the number of abandoned children including here in the city of Cape Town. Some of these children are dumped in dump site and toilets.

We appreciate the decrease of 4,4% in the total number of sexual offences (from 70 514 to 68 332). However, we are concerned that a significant number of women continue to be victims of various forms of emotional, psychological and physical abuses including domestic violence, rape and murder. In the past financial year, there were 198 000

contact crimes committed against women. Most of these crimes were common assault and assault to cause grievous bodily harm followed by sexual offences with attempted murder at 2450 and murder at 3000.

All of these challenges require that we approach the 16 Days of Activism Campaign on No Violence against Women and Children with a greater resolve and determination to mobilize all the people of our country to act against abuse.

The 16 Days of Activism Campaign on No Violence against Women is an international initiative endorsed by the United Nations. It takes place annually from the 25th of November which is an International Day of No Violence against Women. It runs up to the 10th of December which is International Human Rights Day. Other key commemorative days during this period include World Aids Day on the 1st of December 2010 and International Day for Persons with Disabilities, which falls on the 3rd of December of every year.

This campaign focuses primarily on generating an increased awareness of the negative impact of violence on women and children as well as society as a whole. This campaign has served as the main social mobilization tool against the prevalence of acts of abuse against women and children in South Africa.

Over the past 11 years, the campaign has grown exponentially making it the second most known government event in South Africa, after the State of the Nation Address (according to GCIS Tracker Survey). The Tracker Survey also indicates a significant rise from 9% (2003) to 33% (2009) in public awareness levels in rural areas. The standing of the 16 Days Campaign at the Public Sector Excellence Awards as voted by the public confirms the level of awareness around this campaign. The Campaign received gold and bronze in sub-categories of increased awareness and effectiveness respectively and silver in the overall category for campaigns.

In implementing the campaign this year, we have taken into consideration the outcomes of the 10-Year Social Impact Assessment and the 2009 Stakeholders Summit where stakeholders made an assessment of the campaign and recommendations going forward. It is the priority of this Ministry to bring more stakeholders into this campaign so that we march together towards elimination of all forms of violence against women and children. No institution should be left behind, including our media as critical social partner.

The corporate image and theme of the campaign has been well established in society and amongst participating stakeholders nationally. It is for this reason that we continue with the theme of the campaign centred around our key slogan nationally which is: **“Don’t Look Away, Act against Abuse”**.

We have already had some activities which serve as a build up to the 16 Days of Activism. We had the celebration of the National Children’s Day on November 06 where we launched the campaign to improve access to sanitary towels for vulnerable and orphaned girls. We launched the Disability Awareness Campaign which should also

highlight the vulnerability to abuse for women and children with disabilities. The Campaign will culminate with a Disability Summit to be held in Bloemfontein on 02-03 December to finalize the process of domesticating the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

On Saturday, we were in Daveyton, Gauteng commemorating International Men's Day with a programme that encourages men to play their role in the raising of children and mentoring of boys in particular.

The opening event of the Campaign this year takes place at OR Tambo Hall in Khayelitsha here in Cape Town on Thursday, November 25 and will be addressed by His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma. The event will focus strongly on the linkages between alcohol and substance abuse and the problem of abuse of women and children.

Various research initiatives including those of Crime Information Analysis Centre have highlighted alcohol and to a lesser extent drugs as the most common factor for most contact crimes. We also have to highlight the harm caused by fetal alcohol syndrome as a result of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

From 25 November to 10 December, there will be a number of activities focusing on various aspects of the challenge of violence against women and children organized by various government Departments, civil society and other partners as part of the campaign. A calendar of these events is published in the government website. These activities will be complemented by a media campaign run by government and other partners.

As part of this Campaign, the Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities is organizing a meeting of children's rights organizations to look into the whole package of rights afforded to our children through various pieces of legislation. We have to ensure that all the legal provisions relating to children complement the efforts to protect and promote the interests of children. This process has become even more urgent as a result of the incident at Jules High School in Johannesburg.

We are concerned about the violation of the right to privacy for the girl and her family. The court decided to hold this matter in camera but we continue to read in newspapers about the statements purported to have been made by the girl. We are also concerned that there may still be people in possession of cellphone video clips recorded during this incident. That video clip constitutes child pornography and production and/or possession of child pornography is illegal. Law enforcement agencies should indeed act on this.

The closing event on December 10 will be addressed by His Excellency, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Part of the programme will be to relook at the horrible incidents of the murder of innocent families in Ntshongweni and Marrianihill. Our focus will be on profiling the whole package of victim support services that government and other partners are implementing to mitigate the impact of violence on women and children.

It is my belief that we will be able to take the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to even higher levels this year as we implement the 365 Days Plan of Action adopted after the 10 year review of the campaign last year. Through this plan we shall address key underlying factors behind the high prevalence and vicious nature of the recent incidents of violence against women and children.

A society that does not respect its women and children is a dysfunctional society and as South Africans, let us declare that we do not, and we refuse to be part of such a society. It is incumbent upon all of us not to look away, but to act against abuse of women and children.

Thank you.