

Child Protection Week - We all have a role to play!

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2-9 June marked Child Protection Week, a campaign to raise awareness on the rights of children as articulated in the Children's Act of 2005. The campaign began in 1997 and it aims to mobilise all sectors of society to ensure that children are cared for and protected.



South African Actor, Julius Kgoe addressing learners of eight schools in Botshabelo, Bloemfontein.

To commemorate Child Protection Week, Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation through its partner entity Adopt-a-School Foundation, hosted a series of events through Thari programme to raise awareness and to mobilise society to care for and protect children. These events included a multi-stakeholder forum and expo, and a Sport Tournament Against Violence as part of Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation's 15th anniversary, this year.

"We hosted Sport Tournaments Against Violence to focus on the violence that is happening at our schools. The learners participated in netball and soccer tournaments, which allowed us to engage them on issues that are a problem at schools. The topics were around bullying, harassment, fighting each other and fighting teachers. Children don't often have a voice, we used this time for them to open up and talk about issues affecting them on a daily bases," shares Bernice Maponyane, Social Welfare Regional Manager at Adopt-a-School Foundation.

The Sport Tournaments Against Violence included the learners receiving sports kits, encouraging words from Mr Botshabelo Abraham Ntho the Circuit Manager of education in Botshabelo and motivational talk from South African actor Julius Kgoe. The Thari Programme is managed by Adopt-a-School Foundation, at eight schools in Botshabelo, Free State. The programme addresses women and child abuse at school communities in Botshabelo and Diepsloot. It rests on three pillars: psychosocial support for women and children; Safe Parks for vulnerable children, youth and women; and multi-sectoral community forums.

The Safe Parks offers a space where children can complete homework under supervision and benefit from remedial and literacy programmes in a safe environment. In addition to educational support, the staff at the Safe Parks facilitates peer support groups, structured life skills programmes and HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. The programmes give social workers the opportunity to detect and identify signs of abuse.

The stakeholders' forum established in Botshabelo includes relevant stakeholders and service providers from Government departments and non-governmental organisations. These include the Department of Social Development, Department of Justice, Botshabelo SAPS, Lovelife, Khothatsehang, BOLTA, BEDCOM, Botshabelo Sports Academy, BSACA, Mangaung

“Children need special protection because they are among the most vulnerable members of our society. They are dependent on others - their parents and families - for care and protection. In the absence of parents and families, it is important for all sectors to stand together in support of our children, offering a protected and nurturing space to children is a ticket for them to flourish,” Bernice Maponyane, Regional Manager: Social Welfare at Adopt-a-School Foundation said.

“South Africa's Constitution states that every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. It is incumbent on all of South Africans to play a role in protecting children and to create a safe and secure environment for them. Child Protection Week reminds all citizens of their individual duty to protect children and create safe and secure environments for them,” Maponyane said.

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