



# THE BULLETIN

Official external publication of the Department of Social Development - July September 2025

## REHABILITATION SERVICES ARE STILL AVAILABLE FOR YOU



“LET US ALL PROTECT CHILDREN”

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



**D**ear readers of The Bulletin publication we meet once again in the second of the new financial year. I find it important to share with you the repercussions of alcohol and substance abuse in our society. Alcohol and substance abuse affect communities across the world and the risks associated with them are well documented. The scourge of alcohol and substance abuse knows no bounds and cuts across race, class and social barriers. They contribute to violent crimes, road fatalities as well as gender-based violence and femicide. Regrettably, South Africa is one of the countries with a serious problem of alcohol and substance abuse. South Africa was identified in 2022 by Harm Reduction International report as having become one of the world's largest methamphetamine markets.

We have over the years seen a growing trend in a number of young people who are involved in alcohol and substance abuse. Underage drinking has been a growing problem, especially with the increase in 'pens down parties' which are held by pupils to celebrate after writing their exams. We have had incidents where pupils are reported to have died, drowned or suffered physical violence while at these parties. In June 2022, 21 children died at Enyobeni tavern in Scenery park in East London during a pens down party. The youngest, was only 13 years old.

This state of affairs is a concern to government and we need everyone to stand up and fight. It is our joint responsibility to combat alcohol and substance abuse and work to eradicate it in our communities. We should also not

forget that the police need the support of all role players which includes parents and communities members to win this battle.

Substance abuse destroys the fabric of our society and contributes significantly to a range of health related conditions such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, as well as chronic diseases like cardiovascular cancer and mental disorder. Our plan to fight the scourge of substance abuse is therefore an integrated one. At its core is the National Drug Master Plan (NMDP) which is our national blueprint to combat drug abuse, its illicit trafficking and plans to mitigate its negative effects in the society.

The plan outlines strategies to combat substances in South Africa. The plan proposes seven strategic goals to combat the abuse of drugs within communities. It also proposes dealing with the reduction of the demand for drugs, tighter control of drugs intended for therapeutic use, as well as governance, leadership and accountability of the execution of the plan.

However, government alone cannot win this battle. Substance abuse is complex and requires a multi-stakeholder and integrated approach towards a drug free society. We urge parents and community structures to play a role in raising awareness and providing support to those affected by drug and alcohol abuse. Parents, caregivers and teachers need to be on the lookout for signs of drug abuse, which include possession of drug-related equipment such as pipes, rolling papers or small decongestant bottles.

If children display symptoms of alcohol and substance abuse, parents and guardians are encouraged to discuss it openly with them, and assist them to find help. They need to encourage and help their children to avoid alcohol and substances.

Till we meet again in the next publication.

*Petrus Siko*  
Editor-in-Chief



# FROM MEC'S DESK



**T**he first quarter edition of The Bulletin publication comes to you against the backdrop of sporadic incidents of gender based violence that took place in the recent times. One of the mind-boggling incidents was reported in Lekwa Teemane local municipality. On the evening of April 28, 2025, at 20:40, the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) station received a call from one of the community members notifying them of an abandoned newborn baby on the streets of Boitumelong township in extension 4.

As usual the authorities had to intervene. In haste, social workers secured a safe and temporary home for the baby. I took time and trouble to ensure that the baby is being taken care of, from the local hospital to a temporary safe care.

Child abandonment is a violation of human rights and it is a deeply concerning issue in most of our communities. A child is considered abandoned when the child has been left unattended where they may suffer serious harm, and their parent's identity or whereabouts are unknown. There are laws in our country that mandate parents to handover their newly born babies to the nurses immediately after they give birth.

More than a year after young Joshlin Smith went missing, the Western Cape High Court sitting in Saldanha Bay finally handed down judgment against those behind her disappearance. Joshlin's mother, Racquel "Kelly" Smith, and her accomplices, Jacquen "Boeta" Appollis and Van Rhyn, had been found guilty of human trafficking and kidnapping earlier this month. Judge Nathan Erasmus sentenced the trio to life sentences for human trafficking and 10 years for kidnapping.

These cases, alongside the latest quarterly crime statistics released by the South African Police Service (SAPS), point us to a broken moral fibre of our society. According to SAPS recent statistics, crimes against children continue to rise, with increases noted in cases of sexual offences, assault and abduction. Our society needs to go back to its roots and learn again the ways of life where phrase, 'it takes a village to raise a child' was a norm. Every resident lived to protected children.

If a child got lost on their way home, community members would bring the child home safely and reprimand the parents for not taking care of the child at stake. Nowadays, children are being kidnapped and assaulted by the very people that should be protecting them. Some demand ransom money from the parents.

The abuse of children is so shocking. Speaking ahead of the launch of Child Protection Month, Neliswa Cekiso, Director of Child Protection at the national Department of Social Development, revealed that for the 2023/24 financial year, the National Child Protection Register (NCPR) recorded 23,732 cases of child abuse and neglect.

This figure surged to 26,852 cases for the 2024/25 financial year, and Cekiso warned that the number is likely to rise further once the last quarter statistics are included. The reported cases span sexual abuse, deliberate neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and abandonment.

As we go about our daily chores and hustles, let us remind ourselves that the world is looking at us very closely. Everybody wants to see whether we are making in the fight against child abuse. This calls for collective responsibility of many role players in safeguarding the country's most vulnerable citizens children. Let us all play a role in protecting our children.

*Ms Basetsana Rebecca Sussana Dantjie*  
North West MEC for Social Development

## ON THE COVER:

Social Development MEC Basetsana Sussana Dantjie and Community Safety and Transport Management, MEC Wessels Morweng lead anti-GBVF march from Montshioa to Mmabatho Stadium to highlight the plight of violence against women and children.

# MAHIKENG GBV SHELTER OFFERS SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS AND VICTIMS

*A safe haven has been established to provide extensive and life changing services to victims of gender based violence and femicide.*

**By: Keolebogile Gwabeni**

**I**n the heart of the North West's capital of Mahikeng lies the Mahikeng crisis centre – a beacon of hope for women and children escaping the grip of gender-based violence. The Mahikeng crisis centre, which opened its doors seven months ago, is already providing a haven for women and children escaping gender-based violence. Since its official opening by the North West Department of Social Development in November 2024, the shelter has become a vital lifeline for those who have experienced unimaginable trauma at the hands of the perpetrators.

The centre offers extensive and life-changing services, from counselling to legal advice, from healthcare referrals to food and shelter. With a capacity to house up to eight individuals at a time, the shelter offers extensive and life-changing services. Most women who arrive at the shelter are often at their most vulnerable. Here, they are met with compassion, empathy, and a range of essential services. The centre provides immediate needs such as accommodation, food, and toiletries, but its impact goes far beyond basic survival.

This centre has professional staff who provide psychosocial support in the form of trauma counselling and referrals to other relevant stakeholders such as healthcare providers and legal entities. Court support is also offered to ensure victims have the strength and guidance to face legal proceedings.

Its staff complement is all-encompassing. A social worker provides therapeutic and psychosocial support tailored to each survivor's experience. A coordinator oversees the daily operations and ensures that all services run smoothly. Six victim support workers welcome clients, assist with admissions and offer initial counselling to women and children upon arrival. A housekeeper, whose work ranges from managing stocks to ensuring that bedrooms are welcoming and comfortable. A groundsman, who maintains the centre's gardens and keeps the yard clean. And a cleaner, who ensures a hygienic and safe environment throughout the facility.

Each team member plays a crucial role in creating a space where survivors can begin to heal. The dedication of these individuals transforms the shelter into not just a safe space but a home. The Mahikeng Crisis Centre does not operate in isolation.

Its strength lies in partnerships. The shelter works closely with the South African Police Service, the Department of Social Development, the National Prosecuting Authority, the Department of Home Affairs, and various non-profit organisations (NPOs). These collaborations ensure a holistic response to gender-based violence, with each stakeholder playing a part in the survivor's journey to recovery.



MEC Basetsana Susan Dantjie opens Mahikeng Shelter for GBV victims.

Access to the centre is typically facilitated through the Department of Social Development, the police, NPOs, the local Thuthuzela Care Centre, or other shelters. This referral system ensures that victims are guided to safety without further trauma or delay.

Outreach is a key part of the centre's mission. The team works tirelessly to raise awareness about gender-based violence and the services available through campaigns, the media and stakeholder meetings. These efforts not only increase awareness but also reduce stigma and encourage survivors to seek help sooner.

"Vulnerable women and children receive overnight accommodation and trauma counselling at this shelter," explains, the MEC for Social Development, Basetsana Sussana Dantjie. "They also receive social support services such as counselling, protection services, safety and security," Dantjie adds, that the staff members at the centre have what it takes to provide a friendly environment that assures confidence, professionalism, respect, and dignity for the victims.

The centre's work has been widely acknowledged and appreciated, with many community members recognising its critical role in combating the cycle of abuse. Every month, the centre receives five survivors who undergo routine counselling from the staff. Mahikeng Crisis Centre is more than a shelter. It is a place where women and children are empowered to dream again, and where fear is replaced by hope and where the cycle of violence is broken, one life at a time.

# CHILD PROTECTION STARTS IN HOME

*Child protection has become so sacrosanct, with cases of abuse rising to alarming proportions.*

By Lerato Digoamaje

**A**s crime against children surges, the need for deliberate action by all members of the society has never been more urgent. With the trend of recent high-profile cases referencing denominations of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation, such as the kidnapping of Joshlin Smith in the Western Cape and the tragic case of seven-year-old \*Cwecwe from the Eastern Cape, the national conversation around child protection remains critical to the cause.

Even more jarring is the reality that South Africa, it has been explicitly established that a child goes missing every five hours. These are not just headlines, but a reflection of a 'pandemic' that cuts across communities. If we are serious about rescuing vulnerable children from bleak futures, there is one critical question to tackle: How do we rewrite their destinies? The uncomfortable truth, often overlooked, is that the answer begins at home.

When we grew up in those plastic years, we usually heard parents saying, it takes a village to raise a child. Every person on the street was a care-giver and would do anything in their power to protect children. Today, people tend to turn a blind eye, precisely because it is not their child that is being abused. We have reached a point where we have produced bystanders and videographers of gender based violence. This is a sign of a broken moral fibre of our society.

The contribution of the family unit in child protection cannot be overstated. It is within these homes that children must feel safe, loved, and valued. Yet, many South African families are tackling with immense pressures, cultural norms, socioeconomic challenges, and, at times, the very systems meant to protect them. In this climate, government initiatives, such as the recent outreach at Thari Primary School in the Moses Kotane Local Municipality, led by the North West Department of Social Development, remain crucial in addressing child safety and protection. However, no government programme, however well-intentioned, can displace the primary responsibility of parents and guardians in ensuring the role of nurturing potential within each child; a potential that, when left unattended, risks causing more harm and vulnerability for these children. Recent community, such as reintroduction of the Chommy programme in Moses Kotane Local Municipality, highlight the importance of collective action.



These programmes focus on creating safe spaces for children to share their concerns and experiences, as well as providing educational tools that enable them to understand how their rights work and be in better positions to recognise potential threats. These kind of government initiatives still play a progressive role, but they must be supported by a cultural shift within many homes. The home should be the first line of defense against abuse, where children are allowed to speak out with the knowledge that their concerns will be heard and acted upon.

In South Africa, particularly in the North West province, a total of 751 cases were reported by the South African Police Services (SAPS) in the latest statistics report during the 2024/2025 fiscal year, with sexual abuse and deliberate neglect being primed the most prevalent forms of child abuse. During this year's launch of the Child Protection Week, led by Minister Sisisi Tolashe in the Free State, she revealed an additional worrying load of statistics, that hail that some 26 852 cases were reported during the 2024/2025 fiscal year, with physical abuse playing secondary an approximate of 3965 cases being recorded.

However, the challenges facing families are not just about creating awareness, they are deeply tied to cultural practices and historical contexts linked to our homes. Take, for example, the normalised use of corporal punishment, which is still prevalent across many households, predominantly in rural areas. Studies have shown that corporal punishment can have severe long-term psychological effects on children, increasing their vulnerability to violence.

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# HUMAN TRAFFICKING

*A modern-day slavery involving the illegal transport and sale of individuals for the purpose of labour, sexual exploitation and mutilation.*

## What is human trafficking?

**H**uman trafficking is trafficking in persons. Trafficking in persons is a dynamic phenomenon. It is important to note that men, women and children are trafficked for a large variety of explanation purposes. It can be from sweatshops and labour exploitation to exploitation in sex industry, domestic servitude, illegal adoption, harvesting of



**Acting HOD Peggy Mhlongo Kgaboesele leads to anti-human trafficking at Kopfontein border.**

## How does trafficking work?

Human trafficking manifests in false recruitments. Advertisements promising good working and or other opportunities and financial gain may be used to recruit victims. Just to discover that a person is trafficked as they reach their destination.

## How does a person get caught in this practice?

The recruiters advertise a wonderful work opportunity. The person responds positively and as arrangements progress the person discovers that he or she does not even need money for travel arrangements and or documents. The recruiter promises that all expenses will be paid.

Once the victim reaches the destination, it is discovered that he or she has been tricked. There is no evidence of original promises and debt bondage increase, meaning that the victim need to repay the recruiters for the expenditure. The recruiters usually take all travel documents such as an identity document, Visa and passports once the destination is reached. The cellphone is taken to block contact with anybody important or to isolate the victim.

## Who are the victims of trafficking?

Adolescent girls and young women who leave exploitative situations as domestic servants are vulnerable to be recruited in to the sex industry. Boys under the age of 18 are increasingly lured into sex exploitation, fishing and mining industry, farm work and are frequently used in pornography. Men and boys are recruited to work on farms under false promises of being paid and suitable accommodation. Boys who are not in schools or who are on school holidays are more frequently targeted.

Children who are most vulnerable to recruitment for trafficking are child headed households, unregistered children and children living in impoverished rural areas and informal settlements.

## Is ukuthwala trafficking?

Yes. Ukuthwala is a form of abduction that involves kidnapping a young girl with the intention of compelling the girl's family to endorse marriage negotiations.



## How to identify a victim of trafficking

(remember a victim will not be able to identify with the word trafficking)

**Source :** Department of Social Development:

Contact - **Trafficking help line:** 080 055 999

**Police:** 10111

Additionally, cultural norms that promote emotional detachment between parents and children contribute to a sense of isolation and vulnerability. These practices not only perpetuate abuse but also hinder open communication, one of the most effective tools in child protection.

In homes where children feel emotionally supported, they are more likely to report abuse, neglect, or any form of violence they might be experiencing. Parents or guardians who foster an environment of open dialogue can spot signs of distress, which could then in turn make the difference between a child's safety and continued suffering. Emotional literacy does not require financial resources; it requires commitment, time, and the willingness to change cultural practices that have done more harm than good.

In tandem with these grassroots efforts, government initiatives like the North West Department of Social Development's intervention in Bojanala Platinum District have proven to play a progressive role in offering a safe refuge for vulnerable children. The department oversees several Child and Youth Care Centers (CYCCs) across the province, which provide key services to children in distressing circumstances.

These centers, including *Care 2be Kind, Rustenburg* Child and Youth Care Centre, and *SOS Children's Village*, offer more than just temporary refuge. They provide educational support, life skills training, and health screening, all of which interplay integral components in the long-term recovery of children who have experienced abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Moreover, the CYCCs in the region, such as the *Reamogetswe Child and Youth Care Centre*, do not only serve as safe refuges for children between the ages of 0 (the age of infancy) until 18, but also get to provide progressive educational foundations for their future. These centres collaborate closely with local schools and the department's social welfare services to ensure that every child in their care receives proper schooling, health checks, and consistent psychosocial support. In many ways, these centres represent the physical manifestation of what families need to become: nurturing, protective spaces where children can heal and thrive.

How do we ensure that the progressive work being done by the government and non-profit organisations is supported by a parallel cultural shift in family structures? Government can and does intervene, but the real change begins when each of us takes responsibility for our children's safety.

The recent case of a newborn baby abandoned in Boitumelong, Bloemhof, now under government care entities, indicates just how urgent our collective action should be. Every step, from government interventions to local community outreach, contributes to preventing these heart-wrenching stories from becoming the norm.

Parents must understand that child protection is not just the responsibility of schools, social workers, or the police - it starts with them. Simple actions like engaging in open communication, fostering empathy, and creating safe emotional spaces can go a long way in ensuring that children grow up in environments that respect their dignity and protect their rights. While interventions like the Thari Primary School outreach and the work done in our CYCCs are essential, we must not forget that the home is where the foundation for child safety begins.

Let us focus on taking concrete actions within our own homes to foster a culture of respect, understanding, and care. It starts with the decisions we make everyday as parents, caregivers, and community members. Through a contingent collective effort, at home, in our schools, and through government programmes, the urgent call to intervene on this "pandemic" is a plausible cause.

***Lerato Digoamaje is Communicator in the Department of Social Development based in Bojanala District Office.***

# **BUDGET SPEECH HIGHLIGHTS – DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE PICTURESQUE OF THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES ALLOCATED TO THE DEPARTMENT TOWARD THE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE NEW FISCAL YEAR.**

**M**EC for Social Development, Basetsana Sussana Dantjie tabled the 2025/26 Budget Speech Vote, reflecting on what the department had achieved in the past financial year. The MEC also set priorities for the new financial year 2025-2026 that will provide developmental services to the society through 'Re Thuse re Go Thuse programme.

## **SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

The department provided care and protection services through community-based care programmes reaching out to 840 against the target of 633. The department further provide 24-hour care services through a residential care programme reaching out to 367 against the target of 308.

In the current financial year, the department has set aside R17 million to support non-profit organisations (NPOs) which continue to provide care, residential, protective workshops, and social rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities.

## **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE (GBVF) VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES**

The department did provide funding to 16 non-profit organisations (NPOs) to enable them to provide shelter and psychosocial support services to victims of crime. About 1,139 victims of gender-based violence were accommodated in these funded NPOs, while 15,957 victims received psychosocial support services.

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME**

As part of our commitment to strengthening and improving services in our centres, the department appointed a full-time psychologist at the JB Marks In-Patient Treatment Centre at Witrand hospital. We will also extend these services to Taung In-patient Treatment Centre in Greater Taung, Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti.

## **FAMILIES**

The department has facilitated the participation of 6 636 family members in family preservation services. There were 5 136 participants in parenting programmes, while 67 family members were reunified with their families. In the 2025 – 2026 financial year, the department will implement family preservation programmes and fund non-profit organisations (NPOs) to the value of R13m, to expand coverage to deprived areas.



## **PROVISION OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN**

In the past year, 176 children in conflict with the law accessed services in our state secure care centres placed through court orders. We serviced 694 children in need of care and protection in Child and Youth Care Centres. Two Child and Youth Care Centres in Bojanala and Matlosana respectively have been funded to the value of R2.1 million.

Four after-school care centres in Bojanala, Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti districts received R1.1 million. Plans are afoot to increase the number of partial care facilities from four to six with an allocation of R 1.6 m this financial year.

## **HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION CARE AND SUPPORT PROGRAMMES**

An amount of R18.242m has been allocated for the implementation of social behaviour change programmes across all the four districts.

## **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

As part of the commitment to empower more youth, R6m has been set aside to train 1 200 young people across the province. An amount of R 4379m will be used to create jobs through Extended Public Work Programme.



## JOB CREATION

The recruitment process to employ 30 graduate interns for a two year period started on 1 April 2025. In addition, 44 Child and Youth Care Workers learnerships programme targeting the officials who do not have required qualifications to practise as childcare workers has been implemented in partnership with Health and Welfare SETA. About 300 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and youth aged of 18 to 24 will be trained on skills development programmes.

## SOCIAL RELIEF OF DISTRESS AND FOOD SECURITY

The department will fund 23 Community Nutrition Development Centres to the tune of R20.5 m to alleviate hunger amongst vulnerable communities. This funding will further create jobs for 184 community members across the districts. More than 14 305 food parcels were provided to insecure household and individuals experiencing distress, undue hardships, and those affected by disasters. About 8 335 indigent learners and women benefitted from the departmental provision of sanitary dignity packs.

## PRIORITIES FOR 2024/25 FINANCIAL YEAR

- Completion of a shelter for the victims of gender-based violence in Dr Kenneth Kaunda, JB Marks local Municipality,
- Provision of an alternative building in Moretele Service Point to respond to the current Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) challenges affecting staff production.
- Strengthening of the existing short-term shelters for victims of gender-based violence.
- To reach out to more people through integrated services with key stakeholder departments and civil society organisations.

## BUDGET ALLOCATION PER PROGRAMME

PROGRAMME	BUDGET ALLOCATION R'000
1. Administration	265,277
2. Social Welfare Services	673,602
3. Children and Families	387,174
4. Restorative Services	333,653
5. Development and Research	216,707
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>1 876, 413</b>



# SERVICE USERS ACCESS REHABILITATION SERVICES

*Taung treatment centre extends a compassionate hand to those grappling with addiction of substances offering rehabilitation services that ignite hope for a brighter tomorrow.*

**By Lebogang Breedt**

**T**he 26<sup>th</sup> of June is a well-known International Day that recognizes the fight against drug and substance abuse and on this special day, the Department of Social Development working hand in hand with the Department of Health and local stakeholders officially opened a centre that will be operating as a rehabilitation centre adding a symbolic weight to the prestigious day.

Taung treatment centre situated within the Taung District Hospital in Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati was established to meet the growing demand for inpatient rehabilitation services for individuals affected by substance abuse disorders. While awaiting for the centre to be operational, the department in collaboration with the Department of Health and other stakeholders had already started proving support and community based services to clients with substance use disorders in various communities within the district.

The main objective of the centre is to provide prevention and treatment to service users and educate their families on how to give support to rehabilitated users once discharged from the centre to avoid relapse. The centre will also provide psychosocial support and life skills development to service users. The centre also officially admitted its first group of service users who took a positive and life-changing step to recovery. Seven brave service users heeded the call when they heard of the centre and were the first group to be admitted on Thursday, 26 June 2025.

Acting Head of Social Development in the North West, Peggy Mhlongo-Kgaboesele who was leading the day's program, said the launch marked a critical turning point especially with the growing demand for inpatient rehabilitation services and marks a significant expansion of government's efforts to fight substance abuse. "For those starting their journey at the centre, it represents a new chapter, support, healing and a magnificent step to recovery," added Mhlongo-Kgaboesele.

The Treatment centre is the second state-run facility in the province and will assist the government's effort aimed at combating the rising abuse of illicit drugs and substances among the youth. Patients are admitted at the centre on voluntary bases after they have gone for detoxification at their nearby health facilities. Once stabilized, they are then referred to the department of social development for admission.



Acting HOD Peggy Mhlongo Kgaboesele checks equipment at Taung treatment Centre.

Completed in 2018, the centre is designed to accommodate 20 client (ten women and ten men) will assist to relieve pressure on the existing JB Marks Treatment Centre situated in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality.

This marks a major milestone in expanding access to rehabilitation services with the aim to help respond to the high rising demand within the North West Province. The centre obtained its occupancy certificate in April 2025, and has been conditionally registered for a period of 12 Months in terms of the Prevention of and Treatment of Substance Abuse Act 70 of 2008.

Assistant Manager at Taung Hospital, Rebeccah Setona, emphasised the crucial role the hospital played in managing the health needs of substance users. She also hailed and thanked the collaboration between The Departments of Social Development and Health noting that the goal to building healthier communities and restoring hope for those who need them the most was the core reason for these objectives to be achieved. This achievement cemented the relationship between the two departments and other local stakeholders.

The opening of the centre does not only mark the milestones taken to fight the new pandemic of substance abuse that is busy destroying our communities, but to also show the efforts and commitment of government in ensuring that there are facilities in place that aims to help those who battle with this dangerous monster called substance abuse.



# A LIFELINE FOR DEELPAN RESIDENTS

Reatlegile home based care staff provide care and support to families affected by HIV/AIDS in the comfort of their homes.

By Petrus Siko

**R**eatlegile home based care is a beneficiary of the North West Department of Social Development funding model. The non-profit organisation has received a grant totalling just over R1, 157 524 to provide psychosocial services to orphans and vulnerable children. Reatlegile which is loosely translated as 'we are successful', provides services to those who are infected by HIV/AIDS. The organisation uses the annual funding to enhance its services and programmes to the local communities.

Based at Deelpa in Tswaing local municipality, Reatlegile home based care was registered as a non-profit organisation in 2013 by twenty-one volunteers to address the growing number of HIV infections in their area and curb vulnerability among communities. The centre has 500 beneficiaries who continue to receive a variety of critical services from the caregivers, many of whom are vulnerable individuals living in challenging conditions. Most of the beneficiaries are from Deelpa village and Letsopa township.

Its members, particularly caregivers, conduct regular visits not only to ensure that people receive ongoing care and support in a time of need, but that children infected by HIV/AIDS in these homes receive the necessary support from caregivers who can help them with their physical, social and emotional needs. These services extend beyond the walls of the organisation but also into the community as a whole. Young women and girls are provided with sanitary towels as a way of restoring their dignity.

The centre provides children with nutritious meals on a daily basis when they come back from school and assist them with their homeworks. It also offers skills development, family services and You only live once programme targeting young people in the area.

To date, home-based care has provided employment for 31 people whose roles are divided up across the home-based caregivers, social worker and auxiliary social worker. They have managed to build a four roomed electrified structure dissected into a kitchen, three offices and an open plan for serving snacks to learners after school. Between 2021 and 2022 Deelpa village experienced prolonged heavy rainfall resulting in the village being submerged in water, houses being damaged and people being displaced. During this time, Reatlegile appeared head and shoulders in providing nutritious meals to vulnerable community members.



Premier Lazarus Mkgosi dances with the elderly at Reatlegile home based care centre.

"Central to our mandate, we conduct an advocacy programme through information sharing on HIV/AIDS in the communities. We encourage community members to do voluntary HIV/Aids testing. We provide support to the infected and affected individuals, families including orphans and vulnerable children." Its manager Gadifele Baas explains.

Baas adds: "We provide essential services to sick people while simultaneously supporting vulnerable family members. Our staff members provide hands-on support for vulnerable people that includes, home visits, managing medication, hygiene and house cleaning."

Emphasising the importance of home-based care centres, Social Development MEC Basetsana Sussana Dantjie says home-based care provides an alternative to institutionalised care to beneficiaries in the comfort of their own home, ensuring their dignity and emotional well-being.

While at their homes, beneficiaries, are at liberty to engage in their usual chores, fostering a sense of independence and significantly enhancing their quality of life. In a home-based care setup families have a chance to take care of their own members, offer support and strengthen their relationships.



Reatlegile staff members.

# NEW SASSA OFFICE OPENED IN SEKHING

*Newly established office will enhance access to social grant services for community members from many villages in Taung.*

By Obakeng Maje and Solly Sanyane



Opening of new SASSA office at Sekhing village in Greater Taung Local Municipality.

**A** new chapter unfolded as SASSA (South African Social Security Agency) celebrated the grand opening of a fully digitized office in Sekhing village, near Taung. SASSA said this marked a significant milestone in bringing accessible social services closer to the community.

The newly-opened office was officially opened by the North West MEC for Social Development, Sussana Dantjie. The SASSA Regional Executive Manager in North West, Zodwa Mvulane said the auspicious ceremony formed part of the first broader Ministerial Outreach Programme in the region, which focuses on bringing services closer to the people.

Mvulane said the new office continues to enhance access to SASSA services for community members from 14 villages.

“The ceremony kicked off with different government departments offering the much-needed services to the community. We are committed to continuously improving our systems ensuring faster and more reliable service delivery.

“The integration of digital tools and innovations like this new office reflect our dedication to making social grants more accessible and secure for our communities. We are moving towards a future, where every person can access their benefits with ease and confidence,” she said.

Mvulane further said the event reaffirmed SASSA's dedication to transforming service delivery through innovation, community engagement, and partnership. She added that, with the new Sekhing Local Office, now fully operational, residents can look forward to faster, more efficient support, a true step forward in social development.

Following the opening, Dantjie took a walkabout of the new office, marvelling at the innovative features, including a cutting-edge Queue Management System, New Touch Screen Self-Service Kiosks and the Beneficiary Biometric Enrolment designed to enhance customers' experience. She also applauded SASSA for its efforts and emphasized the importance of community care and support for local offices.

“These offices are vital gateways for social development. I encourage communities to take good care of these offices, ensuring they remain safe and accessible for all,” she said.

Meanwhile, the Baga-Mothibi Tribal Council expressed their enthusiasm, sharing their excitement and commitment to supporting the new facility, recognizing its potential to transform community access to social services.



MEC Dantjie opens a new SASSA office at Sekhing village



# SONOP – A HOME TO THE VULNERABLE

*A home away from home where the elderly receives extra attention, care, comfort, residency, and other necessities of life.*

By Obusitswe Keboneilwe



MEC Dantjie celebrates Mandela Day with the elderly at Sonop old age home.

**W**hen the centre first opened its doors, it was to welcome the vulnerable and the needy in the society. Today the same still rings true, albeit with the minor change that the centre is now home to the elderly.

Sonop Home, which lies between Bapong and Brits in Madibeng local municipality, opened its doors in 1939 as home to the victims of World War II, who included people digging diamonds and those working in forestry. Given our well-documented past, the centre was mainly used by whites. However it is now used by all South Africans of any colour, gender and hue. Despite its location, the state-run 24-hour centre is accessible to all older persons from the province. It is currently the only functional state centre that provides nursing care services to older persons and people with disabilities.

The 206 bed capacity facility caters for the frail care needs, assisted living and independent older persons. It also accommodates persons with physical and mild mental conditions. They are housed in four wards with the most populous being the one for frail care needs. The frail care needs has 54 nurses, who are divided into four shifts. The nurses often bear a brunt of beatings from the elderly, especially the ones with dementia.

The other ward is for the assisted, who can mainly carry out some of their tasks but need help in certain areas. The ward for the independent has fewer residents. This is owing to this group still being able to do things for themselves. The centre experiences few applications for the persons in this category.

At the beginning of February 2020, the facility was a home to 163 persons, comprising of 139 Africans, two Coloureds and 22 Whites. The number of Africans at the centre is indicative of the move of this group embracing old age home, something that was once frowned upon.

The admission criteria at the centre is simple, you just need to be an older person (60 years and above) in need of care. The only exception to the admission rule is that any person who suffer from mental illness; this as a precautionary measure. Primarily the core function of the facility is to provide caring services without favour. To be considered for admission, the facility has to satisfy itself with whether the applicant is vulnerable. The applicant's environment is also considered, especially whether it could expose the elderly to harm.

The facility therefore does not turn away the elderly who arrive for care. It is saddening though that some older persons are dropped at the gate without any identification. All persons who are admitted should have proper documents to help in instances where their next of kin could be needed. The centre also has 18 foreign nationals, who cannot be shunned.

Noting that most of the occupants at the centre are old and frail, the meal times are structured as those of hospitals. The elderly have six meals per day, which start with tea and sandwiches, breakfast, lunch, supper and late evening tea. Those who are in need of medication will have their medication administered with the meals. The meals are periodically assessed by a dietician, who has declared Thursdays as vegan meal day, something which was misunderstood recently and caused a kerfuffle on the social media.

The facility might have been morphed into an old age home in terms of Older Persons Act of 2006, but the surrounding community continue to enjoy its myriad of services. There is a clinic at the centre that is open to use by anyone in the community. The local councillor also uses the centre as an office to mediate in the social concerns of the community. Sixty years on, Sonop remains a home to all, the needy and vulnerable.

# NO GRANTS WILL BE CANCELLED WITHOUT VERIFICATION AND DUE PROCESS

*Minister appeals to those who've been requested to visit SASSA offices to undergo the review process to do so, as part of modernising and transforming the agency and curbing fraud in the grant system.*



From the Social Development Minister Sisisi Tolashe

**M**inister of Social Development Sisisi Tolashe stated that no social grants will be cancelled without proper verification and due process. Delivering the department's Budget for the 2025/2026 financial year, Tolashe assured Parliament that the department remains committed to ensuring grants reach only eligible recipients. She noted that recent efforts to review beneficiaries are not about unfairly cutting people off, but about ensuring that only those eligible receive grants.

"We have not stopped or suspended any grant without due process. I wish to appeal to all beneficiaries who have received correspondence to visit SASSA offices and undergo a review process," she said.

Tolashe emphasised that the grant system is a vital social safety net, supporting over 27 million beneficiaries, including 13 million children and more than 4 million older persons.

Of the department's R294 billion budget allocation, R284 billion will go directly to monthly social assistance, while SASSA receives R24.7 billion for grant administration over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period.

She confirmed that the department is conducting a review process in line with Social Assistance Regulations to ensure grants are paid "to the right person, at the right time and place. NJALO!" The minister said this process has already resulted in savings exceeding R1 billion annually.

Over R34.9 billion is allocated to extend the COVID-19 Social Relief Distress (SRD) grant, reaching over eight million unemployed South Africans monthly who are between the ages of 18 and 59 each month.

Tolashe reaffirmed the Department's long-term vision to transform the SRD into a permanent Basic Income Support system. "We are forging ahead with processes to replace the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress with a permanent measure," she said. "Accordingly, we intend to re-table a policy proposal to Cabinet."

"Our plans to modernise and transform SASSA into an efficient future-ready organisation are fully on track," said Tolashe. Innovations include biometric systems, queue management, self-service kiosks and the expansion of Integrated Community Registration Outreach Programmes targeting vulnerable communities, she said. Tolashe also confirmed over R200 million has been allocated to detect and prevent fraud and corruption in the grant system, with pilot biometric systems completed in four SASSA offices and a full rollout expected by the end of the financial year.

On gender-based violence and femicide, the minister said the GBV Command Centre is now fully operational, with a 24/7 toll-free emergency line (0800 428 428) connecting the public to social workers. Tolashe highlighted that R102 million has been allocated to expand shelter services, particularly in areas still without facilities.

In addressing the sector's staffing shortage, Tolashe acknowledged that the country is far from meeting the National Development Plan's target of 55,000 social service professionals by 2030. She condemned the violence faced by social workers and stressed the need to protect these frontline workers.

The budget also provides R216 million for the National Development Agency (NDA), which has helped establish nine community-owned enterprises and raised over R60 million in additional funds. R137 million will go toward strengthening oversight and compliance in the non-profit sector, including measures to combat money laundering and terror financing, she said.



# WEAR ORANGE



**SAY NO  
UNiTE**  
TO END VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN

Every month on the 25th, the world turns orange - not in celebration, but in protest. The United Nations' UNiTE campaign has designated the 25th of each month as Orange Day, a global initiative to raise awareness and inspire action to end violence against women and girls. Join the fight against GBV by wearing some orange on 25<sup>th</sup> of every month. #NoGBV

**MEC Basetsana Sussana Dantjie**  
Department of Social Development



**social development**

Department:  
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North West Provincial Government  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**GENERATION  
EQUALITY**

**STANDS  
AGAINST  
RAPE**



**THE NDP SETS OUT A VISION FOR SOUTH AFRICA FOR 2030.  
IT AIMS TO ELIMINATE POVERTY, AND REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT  
AND INEQUALITY BY 2030**



**social development**

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