**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**1066.   Ms M D Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of Social Development *[Interdepartmentally transferred from the Minister in The Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities on Friday, 5 June 2020]:***

(1)   What steps has her Office taken recently, given that the week of 31 May to 7 June 2020 marked the observance of the National Child Protection week, in fulfilling the mandate to promote and protect the rights of children, especially during this time of uncertainty and fears around the coronavirus and interruptions in schools;

(2) whether her Office has any plans to ensure that the specified vision is achieved; if not, why not; if so, what are the full relevant details? NW1360E

**REPLY:**

1. As a result of COVID-19 lockdown, innovative and new ways of ensuring that children are protected from violence; abuse; neglect and exploitation and reaching out to children whilst in lockdown was and is still done through digital and online media communication.

The theme for 2020 CPW awareness activities, which is within the 365 Days Child Protection programme of action on violence against children, child abuse, neglect and exploitation, is “**Let Us All Protect Children, During Covid-19 and Beyond”.** This themeputemphasis on the responsibility of every citizen to ensure protection and promotion of the rights of children during this difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CPW activities were conducted from 30 May to 7 June 2020. 30 May 2020 was the official opening of the 2020 CPW with onsite outreach programme at an SOS Children’s Home in Rustenburg since the 31 May 2020 was the National Prayer Day as announced by the President on the 26 May 2020.

The Child Protection Week was marked by an array of activities that were done by various key stakeholders in the child protection sector. The stakeholders included, government, non-governmental organisations; civil society, community based child protection organisations and children themselves. Due to COVID-19 restrictions; messaging was done through social media posting, TV and radio talks on child protection topics.

On the 1 June 2020, the department held a webinar with child ambassadors from 9 provinces to commemorate the International Children’s Day; giving child ambassadors an opportunity to share their experiences on Covid-19 and how it impacts on their lives as children. The aim of International Children’s Day celebration was to draw attention to children’s rights and highlight the progress being made towards the realisation, promotion and protection of the rights of children. International Children’s Day is significant as it is the fulfilment of the right to child participation; to ensure that children are active participants in decision making processes on matters affecting their lives.

On the 2 June 2020 the focus was on Early Childhood Development; with the launch of Vangasali, a Xitsonga expression that means “no child should be left behind- every child counts”. This is a campaign that is meant to find every unregistered ECD services to determine the level of support required to meet the minimum norms and standards for registration. The ECD data will support the opening of the ECD upon the easing of the lockdown. It will assist in determining the support required by the unregistered ECD to meet requirements of registration of ECD in compliance with the Children’s Act during the ECD drive.

On the 6 June 2020, a webinar was hosted by DSD in partnership with UNICEF. The Webinar focussed on the protection of children during online use and violations, strengthening protection measures whilst children are on line as they spend too much time on the net doing school work as some learners are studying and receiving learning material online. Experts, children and a parent participated on the webinar reaching millions of South Africans as this was a live broadcast on SABC. The experts included DSD, UNICEF, UNISA, South African Law Reform Commission, Films and Publications Board as well Google South Africa. The message that came out strongly was the importance of intersectoral collaboration when dealing with online issues as it is cross-cutting; the importance of capacity building and training of key stakeholders including parents and caregivers; research to ensure responsive programing; lastly, the importance of stepping of interventions on the protection of children on online use.

On the 07 June 2020; the department held a symbolic closing of the Child Protection Week at Polokong Children’s Village (Child and Youth Care Center), Evaton, Gauteng Province. This activity was to highlight the stepping up of child protection services into the 365 Days Child Protection campaign; making a national call to step up child protection interventions; creating safety nets within families and communities at large scale for holistic care, development and protection of children whilst promoting their well-being.

 (2) It is important to note that Child Protection Week is not the end of protection of children; instead Child Protection Week must be contextualized in the light of stepping up interventions into the 365 Days Child Protection campaign.

The 365 Days Child Protection campaign will be marked by monthly themes where a comprehensive integrated approach will be embraced; continuing with the work that has been started during the CPW activities. The campaign is to ensure that the country address the root and underlying causes of violence to stop it before it occurs; intensifying prevention and early intervention programmes; building capacity of parents, caregivers and families as well as communities, building their resilience to care and protect children.