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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 2153**

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**2153. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

Whether her department has any statistics on the number of child marriages in the Republic; if not, why not; if so, what (a) is being done to prevent such marriages and (b) are the further relevant details in this regard? NW2443E

**REPLY:**

The Department does not have direct statistics on number of child marriages in the Republic as this is the responsibility of the Department of Home Affairs.

1. Education and Awareness is done on Section 12 of the Children’s Act which prohibits child marriages, engaging communities, religious and traditional leaders on the implications of child marriages as well as Section 141 that prohibits child exploitation and children engaging in exploitative child labour.

Advocacy programmes on gender equality are conducted as well as intersectoral training and capacity building to key stakeholders such as SAPS and NPA on their roles and responsibility in the prosecution of perpetrators.

The department has institutionalized 365 days education and awareness programme on violence against women and children, conducted in partnership with other relevant stakeholders to educate the communities about children’s rights, protection of the rights of children from abuse and exploitation which includes child marriages.

The department further implement social behavior change programmes such as CHOMMY, a programme that is intended to equip pre-teenagers aged 10-14 with information and life skills, YOLO- teenagers aged 15-24 which serve the same purpose as CHOMMY. There is also Men and Boys Championing Change programme that is championed by men and is intended in mobilizing other Men in the fight against GBV and HIV; ad to serve as role model for boys especially those without fathers. Boys are empowered on growing up as responsible men and how to deal with issues. Social behavior change programme further includes “Asikhulume”, an InterFaith based programmes which seeks to foster social cohesion, restore moral fibre and healing to individuals, communities and the society.

Provinces embark on skill building initiatives to empower girls, families and communities through sustainable livelihood programmes and cooperatives to reduce poverty in communities which often sees a girl child traded in.

(b) Child marriage is a multi-sectoral issue which requires collaboration with different stakeholders which include government, civil society organizations, private, business, community leadership and structures, and families.