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PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ARE COMPUTER FACILITATED CRIMES ON THE INCREASE?

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM FOR NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

23 November 2020, Centurion. As the country embarks on its 16 Day of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign, the Film and Publication Board (FPB) is mobilizing South Africans through a call to action to eradicate all forms of Gender-Based Violence. The FPB will convene a series of dialogues in 2 provinces on the topic of **Computer Facilitated Crimes against Children**, aiming to advocate for safer content consumption and protecting children from sexual exploitation on the internet.

South Africa is known as one of the most dangerous places in the world for women to live in. *World Population Review* rated South Africa number 3 for the most crime-ridden countries in the world in 2021. Tragically, women and children bear the brunt of this violence, as they are amongst the most vulnerable in society.

As South Africa joins the rest of the world in the global Campaign: 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, it is important to reflect on the grim facts:

- Comparing statistics for Quarter 2 2020 (July to September) versus 2021, the South African Police Services recorded 6 163 people killed in just 3 months - 20% increase over the same period the previous year
- 7,7% were women, and an astounding 31,7% were children.
- During the same period there was a 4.7% increase in sexual offenses (9,556 rape cases were reported across the country in 3 months).
- An alarming 28.6% increase in kidnappings. The recent case of 4 Moti brothers in Limpopo being the highest profile and drawing attention to this trend.



“It is estimated that nearly 42% of SA children have experienced some form of ill treatment and 82% have experienced or witnessed some form of victimisation” (Optimus National Prevalence study). Many South African children are exposed to violence at an early age, in the ‘safety’ of our homes, schools and communities. Environments where children should feel safe and protected. Even children who grow up in relative safety are exposed when they are allowed to access violent content indiscriminately in the form of films, games or other content. Violence begets more violence, plunging society into an ongoing and self-perpetuating cycle of generational trauma.

A study conducted by the Film and Publication Board (FPB) and UNISA in 2015, to assess the impact of media content on South African children, showed that our children are becoming desensitised to violence. This study predates the meteoric rise of digital media in the past 5 years, which has only escalated the exposure to violent content that our children face today.

“Covid-19 lockdowns of various levels during the past two years saw many more children spending leisure or study time on digital platforms, potentially creating a further spike in the exposure to harmful content. Additionally, many who face abuse daily were trapped under the same roof as their perpetrators at this time,” says Interim CEO of the Film and Publication Board, Ms. Nomvuyiso Batyi.

The FPB outreach campaign will take place in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, and will spread the call to action around Computer Facilitated Crimes Against Children and Gender-Based Violence to learners, parents, law enforcement partners, community NGOs, academics and students.

“The advent of new media and technologies coincide with a growing trend of children being exposed to harmful content and falling victim to online predators. Child sexual abuse material, cyberbullying, online trafficking and revenge pornography are amongst the many acts of violence that are perpetrated online. According to an IPSOS survey conducted in 28 countries, 65% of all incidents of cyberbullying occurred on social media, with 45% perpetrated from mobile phones, 38% emanating from online messaging, 34% from online chatrooms, 19% from emails, 14% from other websites, and 6% from other technologies,” says Ms Batyi.

In South Africa, the survey revealed that 67% of all incidents of bullying were committed by classmates, 29% by a young person who was a stranger, 15% by known adults and 14% by adult strangers. Almost



40% of the students surveyed acknowledged that they had been cyberbullied. Suicides related to cyberbullying incidences have shocked the nation in recent months.

In a study conducted by a public-private partnership in the creation of the SA Cyber Safety Awareness Toolkit, a staggering 63% of children surveyed indicated they had accessed inappropriate material online and 61% of the parents of respondents admitted that they do not monitor their children's online activity with no parental guidance software being used.

"It is therefore important to encourage safe and positive use of digital technology among children and young people and start conversations about the importance of restricting or monitoring young children's use of devices to spaces where the family gathers - rather than alone and locked in their bedrooms. Use the internet together," she adds.

Protection of our children's digital footprint as well as defense against cybercrimes are key challenges we face as South Africans, and this lies at the heart of FPB's 16 Days of Activism of No Violence against Women and Children campaign. The campaign aims to raise awareness in communities of online threats and to encourage everyone to use the internet in a safe and responsible manner all year round. Women and children in the digital age are vulnerable to online dangers such as cyber misogyny, grooming, pedophilia, and cyber bullying.

Cyberbullying is any type of harassment or bullying using digital technologies. This includes teasing, fabricating lies about someone, making rude or mean comments, spreading rumors, or making threatening or aggressive comments. The technology used could include text messages, pictures or video clips via mobile phone cameras, phone calls, e-mails, chat rooms, instant messages, websites and blogs, social networking sites or internet gaming.

Apart from cyberbullying, children's use of information and communication technology presents a range of other risks that include sexual solicitation by adults and exposure to harmful content such as violence, pornography and websites that incite hatred towards specific groups of people.

ENDS



Media who are interested in joining forces with the FPB's 16 Days of Activism campaign are requested to contact:

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Notes to the Editor

The Film and Publication Board (FPB) is the regulator of the creation, production, possession and distribution of films, games, certain publications, and more recently certain online content. This is done to provide consumer advice to enable adults to make informed viewing, reading and gaming choices for themselves and children in their care; to protect children from exposure to disturbing and harmful material and from premature exposure to adult experiences, and to make the use of children in, and the exposure of children to pornography, punishable.

Paramount to the mandate of the FPB is the protection of children. Protecting children under the Act is a proportional balancing of the rights afforded in the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights against the right of the child. The protection of children as enshrined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights includes physical, mental, emotional, spiritual or moral harm to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. It further ensures that children's best interest is of paramount importance in every matter concerning a child.