



**REMARKS BY DEPUTY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE
CRF THARI PROGRAMME FOR THE SUPPORT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

REENTSENG PRIMARY SCHOOL, BOTSHABELO

15 SEPTEMBER 2017

Minister of Women in the Presidency, Ms Susan Shabangu,
Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Mr Enver Surty,
HOD of the Free State Department of Education, Adv Tsoarelo Malakoane,
CEO of the Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation, Ms Donn  Nicol,
Leadership of the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers,
Our child and youth care workers,
Sponsors and social partners,
The community of Botshabelo,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we are gathered here in Botshabelo to demonstrate practically our care and commitment to the well-being of our country's children.

Children are society's greatest asset and we need to protect and nurture them. Only by taking good care of them today can we secure our future.

To harm them is to destroy innocence and weaken our social fabric.

To neglect them is to tear down the foundation upon which all successful nations are built.

It was the father of our nation, President Nelson Mandela, who taught us that:

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way it treats its children."

On behalf of the Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all partners who have joined hands with us to give our children a life free from violence, harm and fear. Through the launch of the Thari programme we seek to rekindle the dreams of our children and youth, and create a life for them which knows no neglect, scorn, exclusion or despair.

As we mourn the recent murder of two teenage girls, Thato Salemane and Tumisang Lengau, here in Section K last weekend, we are in no doubt about the challenges we need to confront.



Our hearts go out to the families of these young women as we together pledge to bring an end to violence against the young and the innocent. We call on all members of the community to work with the police to bring those responsible for these murders to justice.

We must not accept that the youth of Botshabelo must find themselves in notorious and violent gangs. Our children were not born to terrorise the community. By working together we must demonstrate that there's nothing to stop Botshabelo from producing more national leaders like Fikile Mbalula. We must show them that nothing can stand between them and their dreams to become sports stars like Ditheko Mototo and the late Abram Raseleman of Bloemfontein Celtics.

I was particularly pleased to see the greatly improved matric results from the schools of Botshabelo in 2016, and am confident that these will continue to improve.

Ladies and gentlemen, we know too well that many of the children in our schools come from troubled homes. Many are raised by single parents without any involvement of their fathers. Many experience violence, abuse and trauma. School is a sanctuary for them. When they arrive at school hungry, they are fed. When they are in pain or feel dejected, our teachers are called upon to become parents and counsellors.

We must therefore make it our responsibility to ensure that our schools never become sites of violence and abuse. Learners sometimes experience violence at the hands of fellow learners and even from teachers. Teachers who sexually abuse learners are a national disgrace and an affront to the ideal of building a caring society. They have no place in our schools.

When many of our learners leave school, they return to families where hunger and alcohol abuse are common. Without anyone to turn to they end up seeking refuge in dangerous streets. In search of meaning, identity and affirmation they join gangs and get trapped in a life of crime. They harm communities and end up in prison or the graveyard.

We must refuse to be numbed into feelings of powerlessness. We dare not resign ourselves to this sad reality. This is a time for vision and courage. It is the perfect time for bold action to protect and guarantee the future of our children. This is what the Thari programme and Isibindi Ezikoleni are about. They are about improving the safety of our children and improving educational outcomes.



When a school like Reentseng closes its gates, the safe park will provide a secure environment for the children after school, on weekends and even during school holidays. Our qualified child and youth care workers will empower our children with life skills. These workers will identify vulnerable children and provide them and their families with psycho-social support.

Women and children will be empowered to protect themselves against abuse and exploitation. The initiative will also bring in men and boys to address gender-based violence, masculinity and sexual abuse.

To improve their chances of success and to keep them motivated in class, the care centre will also offer additional educational support. The model depends on the care workers to supervise homework, promote reading and improve study skills.

Learning must remain inclusive, a joy and a wonder. At the safe park children will participate in creative artistic expression and sports to develop their talents.

We have no doubt that this project will yield positive results. As a Foundation our success derives from a track record of bringing together various stakeholders to attempt to resolve some of the country's key developmental challenges. The sponsors who join us, civil society organisations we collaborate with, and government departments we partner with, all boast leaders who are passionate about improving the lives of our people.

They are women and men of immense courage, whose vision is to see a thriving South Africa. They are dedicated community builders who will not rest until they have contributed to building a prosperous and peaceful country that our children will be proud to inherit.

As Chairperson of the Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation I wish to extend my deep gratitude to all our partners for being formidable and dependable allies in the cause of rebuilding South Africa.

We call on many others to contribute to make Botshabelo a fort and a refuge – not of social ills and despair, but of hope and prosperity. It is their contributions that will ensure that the Free State continues producing excellent matric results.

I want to make an impassioned plea to our young people: Please work hard, stay in school and seek support when you need it. Don't lose hope.



Don't give up on your dreams. As government, business and civil society, we are committed to your success. We want your future to be better than your past.

We urge the community of Botshabelo to look after the safe park. Our children and their care workers must at all times feel secure. From the time of its establishment Botshabelo was seen as a place of refuge.

It is in our hands to ensure that it lives up to its name and its promise.

I thank you.