

TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 01 JANUARY 2009

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STATEMENT: NEW YEAR BABY BORN BY AN ORPHAN LIVING IN DURBAN STATION

A orphaned young girl (15 year-old) from Maphumulo dropped out of school in standard five (5), raped by a cousin, ostracized by her family for reporting the rape to the local police and subsequently ran away from home to live on the streets in Mansel Road, Durban, with an aunt who sells in the taxi ranks of Durban station has given birth to a New Year's Baby at 01H08 this morning.

Living under squalor conditions, very limited (if any) parental care & supervision and overcrowded accommodation she fell pregnant at 14 years and today gave birth to Addington Hospital's New Year healthy Baby girl weighing 3,26kg. "God wants me to keep the baby. I will ensure that he grows up healthy and attends school even though I do not know how" says the teenage mother whose identity cannot be revealed because she is a minor.

"The Department of Health is very concerned with the ever increasing number of child rape victims in the province. It is worse when girls are forced into parenthood because their families and communities cannot protect and/or care for them at this tender young age. Adolescent mothers are at increased risk of dropping out of school, unemployment, and long-term social welfare dependency. They are also unlikely to marry and more likely to have larger families. Children of unmarried teen mothers are far more likely than the children of older, two-parent families to fall behind and drop out of school, to get into trouble with the law, to abuse drugs and join gangs, to have children of their own out-of-wedlock, and to become dependent on welfare. They are also at greater risk of being born at low birth weight and of suffering health problems during childhood" said Dr Yoliswa Mbele; Acting Head of Department of Health.

A number of factors contribute to teenage pregnancy and births to teenagers, including high rates of sexual activity among teenagers, inconsistent use of contraception (including condoms), sexual abuse and coercion, and social taboos. In general, teenagers who are least prepared to care for a child—those experiencing problems in school, those with low educational and career aspirations, those engaging in risk-taking behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, and those from low-income families and communities—are the

most likely to become pregnant and give birth. Those who want a child or feel undecided about having a child are also more likely to become teen parents.

The Department of Health will scale-up campaigns a reducing the incidence of child rape and teenage pregnancy. We would also be engaging other government departments, faith based organizations, and traditional leadership, women and community based organizations in an effort to rally community based and people driven campaigns. These campaigns will have ripple effects as they will also reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) and unwanted pregnancies.

ISSUED BY:
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