



28 March 2011

Police need to be put in the hot seat on crime against women and children

Last week General Bheki Cele and other senior representatives of the SAPS were forced to beat a hasty retreat from parliament after Police Portfolio Committee chair Lydia Chikunga expressed outrage when they could not explain why the SAPS 2011/2012 Annual Performance Plan was inadequate, and looked like a "cut and paste" job copied from the plan presented to the committee last year.

The Shukumisa Campaign welcomes the Portfolio Committee's no-nonsense approach. "Police plans consistently claim that crimes against women and children are a priority. We want to know how they propose to make this a reality, and not just another paper promise," said Lisa Vetten of Shukumisa.

As of Friday April 1 2011 the specialised Family Violence Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) Units (disbanded in 2006 by Jackie Selebi, at great cost to survivors of violence) will once again be fully operational.

The top cops will be back in the parliamentary hot seat today [29 March 2011] and we have a few questions of our own:

*Will the 1 April deadline be met? Are there sufficient FCS detectives to services all stations in each cluster?

* Will the FCS Units have separate budgets to enable them to buy Sexual Assault Evidence Kits, and to transport victims to hospitals and counseling centres? Or will these budgets continue to be controlled by station commanders who are inclined to divert these resources to other ends?

* How will detectives' performance be measured when following up on cases? Shukumisa can provide numerous examples where investigating officers have failed to inform victims that the perpetrator has been granted bail. This means victims of sexual offences often do not know the perpetrator is back on the streets, and victims are intimidated and sometimes withdraw their cases as a result.

* What action plans do the police have to establish minimum standards for services to victims of violence? Shukumisa has encountered many instances where children reporting sexual violence were treated with a lack of sensitivity, accused of lying or told to "hurry up" when they tried to explain what had happened.

* What training, recruitment and resourcing will be put in place to ensure these standards of service are delivered to clients?

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