

The Weekly

BABY DUMPING CRISIS IN MATJHABENG

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A gruesome finding ... Warrant officer, Kevin Leeuw from the Welkom Local Criminal Centre, investigates the scene where the corpse of a child was discovered, with Constable Sithokothezi Ndayi

There has been an alarming increase in foetus and baby killings in the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, with the bodies being discarded at dumping sites and dams. According to the Health Systems Trust, 40 babies have been dumped in the Free State alone in 2012.

Police spokesperson, Captain Stephen Thakeng, revealed that these incidents are particularly common in rural areas such as Kutlwanong, Thabong, Bronville and Meloding.

“I believe this number has definitely increased over the past year. Over the past year we have come across countless newborn babies and children between the ages of two and seven years old.”

Two women made a gruesome discovery of a corpse of a toddler, between Erfdeel Road and Masimong in the Hennenman policing precinct last week Friday.

The two women, who reside at Freedom Square in Thabong, were allegedly walking to the Masimong No 4 shaft to look for scrap metal. When they passed a small tree, they noticed clothes at the base of the tree.

According to one of the women, Maleshoane Leballo (46); when they approached the tree to take the clothing, they saw a baby's foot.

“I then jumped back and told my friend, Marta Ralethohlanyo, that there is a child under the clothes,” she said.

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Leballo and Ralethohlanyo immediately alerted the police, who promptly attended to the scene. Crime scene experts were also summoned and paramedics declared the toddler dead on the scene.

“It is estimated that the child is between three to five years old and the body had already decomposed. It is suspected that the baby might have been dumped under the tree a week ago. She was taken to the state mortuary in Welkom for a post-mortem,” said Thakeng.

Thakeng said even though there is no information about the identity of the little girl and no suspects have been identified, an inquest docket was opened for further investigation into this matter.

According to Thakeng, another case was reported at Kutlwanong, on November 4, of a foetus that was found by an employee of the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, who then alerted security officers who were on duty at the site.

Jerry Suping, of Matjhabeng Local Municipality’s public safety unit, noted that dumping toddlers has become a trend and most of the perpetrators are young mothers.

Suping has pleaded with the community to help police officials by coming forward with information, if they know of someone who was pregnant and mysteriously lost the baby, especially when dead babies are reported to have been found at such sites.

Furthermore, parents have also been urged to be vigilant of their pregnant daughters, so that they can also report to the police should these sort of incidences occur, concerning their own children.

“All that can be done by Matjhabeng employees; the police, as well as security personnel when they find these foetuses is to report the matters to emergency services and the police, where a docket is opened (sic), but more than that, they cannot do much (sic).

This is why it is important for the community to be on the lookout and help wherever possible,” added Suping.

Suping advised mothers to consider various alternatives before deciding on dumping a baby. He said examples of such avenues are termination at early stages, or adoption if it is too late to terminate.

Furthermore, mothers should go for counselling so that they are able to come to terms with the decisions they make, fully aware of the consequences and implications thereof.

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