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Press release

Child Protection Week - Protecting All Children during Covid-19 and beyond.

Johannesburg – 02 June 2021, the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA), representing asylum seekers, refugees and migrants' communities, joins the rest of South Africans in commemorating child protection week and raising awareness of the rights of children during the Child protection Week (30 May - 6 June 2021) under the theme, "Let us protect children during Covid-19 and beyond." The Department of Social Development who is the custodian of child rights and protection re-affirmed that this is articulated in the Constitution of South Africa and Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005).

The week's objective is to raise awareness on the need to protect all children including local, unaccompanied, separated, migrant, stateless and undocumented children against both physical and emotional abuse, trafficking, exploitation, neglect and violence. CoRMSA strongly believes that this can be achieved through ensuring that the most vulnerable children especially children in migration including all children as they prone to vulnerability are educated about their rights as well as educating adults, parents, guardians, health care workers, social workers, teachers and other professionals who are responsible for protecting children's rights as enshrined on section 28 of the South African Constitution.

CoRMSA has also noted that violence against children remains a concern and a fundamental challenge currently facing South African societies and across the continent and globally, despite immense efforts to repress this menace. The outcome of rigorous violence and inequalities which emanated from South Africa's past is amalgamated by utmost contemporary poverty and unemployment. As a result, many children are positioned at risk of domestic violence, substance abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Children are becoming even more vulnerable to these abuses as the crisis of Covid-19 continues. Furthermore, although South Africa is a major destination

for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, these children face discrimination and are repeatedly denied access to basic services such as education, health care and social security benefits especially in this Covid-19 pandemic. The rapid growth of discrimination and violation of children's rights in South Africa deeply worries CoRMSA, just like other concerned stakeholders.

Therefore, CoRMSA reminds all South Africans and all citizens across the world that children in South Africa live in a society with a comprehensive Constitution that highly regards the rights, equality and dignity of all children who live in South Africa regardless of their documentation status, nationality or ethnicity. CoRMSA also re-affirms that protecting children from violence, exploitation, discrimination and abuse is not only a basic value but also an obligation explicitly set out in Article 28 of the South African Constitution.

CoRMSA is working diligently towards creating South African societies free from child discrimination, violence, abuse and negligence. Collaboratively, it is working effortlessly with other concerned partners and stakeholders to combat such occurrences. In protecting children from all these social ills, CoRMSA focuses on raising awareness through advocacy, lobbying, intervention, policy submissions and knowledge sharing.

Having pledged to fight for the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant children, CoRMSA acknowledges all the plight of all concerned children and is committed to promote and protect their rights regionally and globally. Henceforth, it remains devoted in creating South African communities in the region and in the globe where equality, human dignity, love and children's rights prevail and where national differences and documentation status are not instrumental to the differentiation of one another.

Henceforth, in surpassing such children predicament, CoRMSA encourages all South Africans to support Child Protection week and to ensure that a safe and inclusive environment is created for every child. Particularly, it calls upon the South African government to take full responsibilities in protecting the human rights of all children who live in South Africa in a way that promotes and protects their safety and well-being.

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