

Namibia commemorates Day of the African Child

Stampriet, 16 June: Namibia joined the rest of the African continent in celebrating the Day of the African Child, commemorated annually on 16 June across Africa since 1991. The National commemoration for Namibia was held in Stampriet in Hardap region, under the theme, “Leave No Child Behind for Africa’s Development”. This theme is in line with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development principle ‘leave no one behind’, which tackles inequality in the development process.

The Day of the African Child is a day to honour and pay tribute to the students who were killed in 1976 in Soweto, South Africa, for protesting against injustice and inequality under the apartheid regime.

The day now provides an opportunity for children, parents, governments, civil society organisations, UN Agencies and other stakeholders to take stock of achievements made to ensure that no child should ever go through any form of injustice or deprivation.

The Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Hon. Doreen Sioka, in her remarks during the occasion, emphasised that Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), outlines education as the cornerstone for development. She highlighted that education is a fundamental tool to empower children, enable them to achieve their maximum potential and enhance their capacity to benefit from other entitlements that promote their wellbeing. She therefore urged parents and caregivers to send children to school to ensure that they prosper and become self-reliant in the future.

“Our children are our future generation, our future leaders. I therefore call upon you [parents] to help the Government of Namibia to make sure that your children attend school regularly,” said Hon. Sioka. “When parents are involved in their children’s education, the children do better and develop a positive outlook towards education and schooling.”

The Government of Namibia’s budgetary prioritisation in Education is one of the positive strides to meeting the targets of SDG 4 and to adequately equip children in Namibia with the required skills as the world becomes increasingly competitive. The implementation of Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education has made it possible for more children to access education. Other positive commitments to children’s lives are seen through the Harambee Prosperity Plan, the policy on the Child Grants and the successful Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission programme which has resulted in more than 96% of babies born to HIV-positive mothers testing negative for HIV.

“I congratulate the Government of Namibia for taking this day seriously and for mobilising collective efforts for the sake of promoting the rights of Namibia’s children,” said UNICEF Representative, Ms. Rachel Odede. “This attention and strong political commitment to the rights of children has been translated into the Child Care and Protection Act of 2015 and also in the progressive policies and strategies which are in conformity with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

Children who attended the commemorations in Stampriet showcased a variety of traditional song and dances as part of their celebration of their day.

