Crisis time for KZN children

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CHILDREN in KZN were "in crisis" with about 20 teachers a year being suspended on ill-health grounds for indecent relationships with pupils, the number of schoolchildren using drugs and alcohol had increased by 15%, and police control and almost a third of all substance abusers younger than 39, a Durban conference on crime and children found.

Education MEC Sezemo Mchunu called for decisive action against drug and alcohol abuse in schools by departments, NGOs and school governing bodies to work together.

He said there was an association to "institutionalise" the long fight to pull KZN's youth back from the brink.

Mchunu told delegates to the weekend conference of his government's concern with the growing number of drug and alcohol related crimes.

And he said he had found weapons, drugs and drunk pupils.

The/index 37/2001/04/22 children's department has 10,000 teenagers in 2011 were severe for KZN, home to three of the country's largest drug and alcohol-related HIV/AIDS-positive population.

By June last year, 46 pupils had been reported for running away from home. (How) had he found that he had been abandoned.

Mchunu related horror stories, including how a teacher had killed and buried his schoolgirl who a boyfriend had killed and buried. One young person had hanged himself out. (How) he had found the dead.

Linda Naidoo, Childline's provincial director, said there was a growing concern with the increasing sexualisation. More than 40 percent of children had phoned. They had lost one or both parents (more than in any other province).

Last month, the NGO's crisis line received 270 cases from children, 200 cases relating to behavioural problems such as aggression and running away from home; 400 involving the commercial exploitation of children for sex and domestic labour and pornography; 600 pleas for help in dealing with divorce, death; and HIV/AIDS infections; and more than 500 for advice into body image, learning difficulties and bullying.

Bo Birjoo, head of the SA Council for Educators, said the "biggest phenomenon" gleaned from the conference was the proliferation of pupil romances and the sexual abuse of children by teachers.

He said that to bring perpetrators to book, it was crucial to have a "culture of silence and complicity" in communities.

One of the speakers, Mr. Juma, had a year a banned from the profession, 95 percent of the teachers had been guilty of sexual misconduct, Birjoo disclosed.

However, he said, "over 95 percent of teachers had been guilty of sexual misconduct, Birjoo disclosed."