

News

## Creche to honour slain teen

By Loyiso Mpalantshane - 11 June 2015

Work has started on bringing a young murder victim's dream of a creche in a remote village outside Dutywa to reality.

Volunteers from the India-based Samarpan Foundation started building a new double-storey creche on Monday in honour of Lutho Qudalele, who was 19 when she was kidnapped, raped and killed in August.

The building uses a novel construction method involving waste plastic bottles filled with wet soil (see sidebar report).

Once completed, the new building will replace an old mud structure from which Qudalele's heartbroken mother, 42-year-old Babalwa Qudalele, ran a creche.

Speaking to the Daily Dispatch yesterday, Babalwa said her "bubbly" daughter had played a key role in running the creche with her by raising funds for it, attending community meetings and buying groceries to feed the children.

She said Qudalele had even successfully lobbied the department of social development to provide monthly funding used to run the facility.

But what Qudalele really wanted was a new building.

"She will never come back. The fact remains I lost someone precious and very close to me," said Babalwa, adding that there was some comfort in her daughter's dream being realised.

Qudalele's father, Masakhane Qudalele, said he never wanted to see the man arrested in connection with the murder of his daughter.

"I want five life terms with no parole," he demanded.

Qudalele, a first-year social work student at North West University, was last seen by her father when he sent her to the creche to fetch sugar.

A manhunt was launched soon after her disappearance, but a shepherd discovered her body eight days later floating in a river about three kilometres from her home in Drayini.

Her arms and legs were chained.

Her murder sparked outrage in Dutywa and police came in for fierce criticism at her funeral.

Luthando Qwele, 26, – who lived near the creche – will appear in the Mthatha Regional Court in August to face charges of kidnapping, rape and murder.

Butterworth police spokesman Captain Jackson Manatha said police deserved praise for ensuring that Qwele was behind bars.

Samarpan Foundation founder Patrick San Francesco said they were touched by the plight of children who had nowhere to learn.

Once completed, the new creche will feature classrooms, a kitchenette, administration office, bathrooms and septic tank toilets.

It will accommodate around 60 toddlers from nearby villages.

"The idea is that we would like to have children who are mediocre in studies but good human beings.

"no point in having brilliant children who are selfish, arrogant ... disobedient. We focus on human values," he said.

"We want to make learning fun. Today's education is boring for children so they need a stimulant."

Francesco, who describes himself as a healer, said they were also involved in offender rehabilitation, environmental, health and food projects in India, Europe, USA, Austria and Turkey.

They have up to 120 volunteers from all parts of the world.

He said the idea of using plastic bottles in construction came after one dropped on his foot.

"A bottle of water once fell on my foot. It hurt me a lot, like it was a stone. And then I realised that if I put water inside it is like a stone, a brick which does not go away," he said.

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