

“WE HOPE OUR VOICES WILL BE HEARD AND CONSIDERED”

WITH GREAT RIGHTS COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

“WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE INFORMATION YOU WILL MAKE DECISIONS AND TAKE ACTIONS THAT ARE NOT GOOD”.

“WE THINK IT IS GOOD TO BE INFORMED AND EMPOWERED, TO HAVE CONFIDENCE AND FEEL GOOD ABOUT WHAT I AM DOING, TO HAVE PRIDE IN MYSELF AND TAKE CARE OF MYSELF AND RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE”.



HEAR OUR VOICES



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Nelson Mandela
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CHANGING THE WAY SOCIETY TREATS ITS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

HEAR OUR VOICES

Children's Complimentary Report South Africa

SUBMITTED TO THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE
OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND
WELFARE OF THE CHILD

In response to South Africa's Second Country
Report to the African Committee of Experts
on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
regarding the implementation of the African
Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

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INTRODUCTION

The Children’s Complementary Report from South Africa is directed to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) in response to South Africa’s Second Country Report to the ACERWC regarding the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Save the Children South Africa (SCSA) in collaboration with Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund (NMCF) and Molo Songololo held a National Children’s Consultation Workshop on the 27th to 28th May 2017 in Hatfield, Pretoria. The primary purpose of the workshop was to facilitate children’s discussion, support and guide them to write and produce a Children’s Complementary Report to the ACERWC.

In total, one hundred and seven (107) children (53 boys and 54 girls) from 12 to 17 years of age (but which included four 18-year-olds) from all nine provinces of the country attended the workshop. Child Rights Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in collaboration with children from the different provinces identified, elected and nominated children to participate in the National Children’s Consultation Workshop. Table 1.1 presents the total number of child delegates per province, and Child Rights CSOs.

No.	Province	Child Rights CSOs
11	Eastern Cape	Umtata Child Abuse Resource Centre
10	Free State	Save the Children
20	Gauteng	Kids Haven and Save the Children
10	KwaZulu-Natal	KwaZulu Region Christian Council
24	Limpopo	KG Maluleke Memorial Disability Integration & Save the Children
11	Mpumalanga	Save the Children
11	North West	SOS Children’s Villages Rustenburg
6	Western Cape	Molo Songololo
11	Northern Cape	Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund Child Ambassador

Table: 1.1 Total Number of Child Delegates, per Province, and Child Rights CSOs

Therefore, this report is the product of the National Children’s Consultation Workshop, which comprised children from all the above-mentioned Child Rights CSOs in the different provinces of South Africa. The Children’s Complementary Report is a true reflection of children’s views and opinions captured at the National Children’s Consultation Workshop held on 27 May 2017 as well as the provincial workshops.



GENERAL INFORMATION



“HI I’M THANDI”.

We attended the National Children’s Consultation Workshop held in South Africa. We want to thank Save the Children South Africa, the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund and Molo Songololo for creating the opportunity for us to be “heard.” And now we want to talk to you about what it is like to be a child in South Africa.



“HI I’M TSHEPO”.

Our country belongs to the African Union. And as part of the African Union, the country needs to report on how the children of South Africa enjoy the rights given to them by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

“Some of us only know about the African Union from the organisations we belong to or from news reports. We were not aware that there is a special committee set up by the African Union. And we don’t know who the Committee members are or what they are supposed to do”. - Grace

Unfortunately, we have not had enough time to be properly informed about the South African Government’s First or Second Country Reports, or the comments of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on the reports. There are many laws in South Africa that protect children. But there are still many problems.

“In our communities where children’s rights are being violated and the laws are not implemented. Many children do not have birth certificates or are unable to get them. There are children that are not in school, who are expelled and are not followed-up to return to school.s Too many children do not enjoy proper nutrition and who are hungry. Not all children have access to health care, medicine and treatment. We see many children who are homeless and living on the streets, in backyards and open spaces. Too many of us are bullied, abused, exploited and victims of violence and crime”. - Thandi



“HI I’M GRACE”.



We would like to recommend that: Laws, policies and programmes for children must all form a safety net starting from the highest level. We need the government departments to work together to ensure that laws are implemented by all those who work or are involved with children.

We urgently need one very important and great protector of children who we can go and talk to about our needs. To us this “Ombudsperson for Children or Children’s Commissioner must be considered and set up immediately. It is the most important subject”.

We feel that government must spend its money more wisely by focussing on all the things that are stopping us from having a normal healthy childhood.

Let us start by defining who we are.



SOUTH AFRICA

WHEN ARE WE CHILDREN AND WHEN ARE WE NOT?

We are children. According to the law that protects children, the Children’s Act, we are children until we turn 18. It also says we sometimes need to be protected from adults, other children, and ourselves. We agree with this. But some of the other laws and practices say different things. We think all the laws should say the same thing namely, a child is a child until she or he turns 18.



“THE LAW SAYS A CHILD CAN HAVE SEX AND BABIES FROM THE AGE OF 16 YEARS, BUT THE LAW ALSO SAYS THAT YOU CAN BE MARRIED FROM THE AGE OF 12 OR 14 YEARS, AND THAT YOU CAN HAVE ACCESS TO CONDOMS AT 12 YEARS – THIS IS CONFUSING”. - TSHEPO

Here are some of the problems with laws that do not all agree on what a child is.

MARRIAGE, RAISING CHILDREN AND HAVING SEX

Marriage and taking care of children are for adults. We will experiment with everything, we are children. This includes sex. It cannot be a crime for children to experiment with sex. But there are and must be limits. The recent changes to the Sexual Offences Act are good.

- None of us should be forced into having sex by anyone.
- No child should have sex before they are 12 years old.
- Older children between the ages of 16

and 18 years are not allowed to have sex with children younger than 16.

- Children between the ages 16 years and 18 years that have sex can only do so if there is no more than 2 years (24 months) difference in age.
- Adults are not allowed to marry or have sex with children.
- The records of children convicted of sexual offences under the old law must be removed.



“IF CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 16 ARE ALLOWED TO HAVE SEX, IT WOULD ENCOURAGE MORE TEENAGE PREGNANCY”. SOME CHILDREN WILL HAVE SEX AND THAT IT IS PART OF THE NORMAL SEXUAL CURIOSITY AND DEVELOPMENT” - TSHEPO

Now having said that the one law says who can have sex with who and when,

we think we should talk more about culture, traditions, and customs.



We would like to recommend that:

The girl-child should not be forced to marry old men-Children should not marry; only adults should.

Children must be encouraged to stay in school and finish their schooling and only consider marriage once they are over 21 years.

CULTURE, TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

Culture, tradition and customs are important. They give us identity as people. But they must comply with the law. Our parents, the elders in our communities and the communities must obey the law. Practices like “ukuthwala” that force girl children into marriage, sex and raising children before they are ready. This must stop. We think that no child should be forced to do any of the above.

You see the problem here? The Children’s Act says we are children until we are 18. The Sexual Offences Act says adults are not allowed to marry or have sex with children. Other laws say we can have babies when we are 16 years. We may get married at 12 or 14 years. There are practices like “ukuthwala” that force girl children into marriage, sex and raising children before they are ready. We think that no child should be forced to do any of this.

How can we get married to an adult, which is not allowed to have sex with a child, before we can have sex and babies?

There are other practices that are part of the culture and traditions of our country that must not happen to children.

Body parts of children are still being used in “muti”. Some children die as a result. The rest are just scared or maimed for life.

As part of “ukuthwala” girls are cut in their privates and tests are done to see if she is still a virgin. This is a crime, but it continues because it is part of a cultural practice. Boys are hurt very badly and some die because circumcisions are not done by trained people. This happens every year.

Even though lots has been done regarding these things, a lot more needs to be done to protect us from these dangerous practices.



We recommend that:

We should be protected against old customs and traditions that do not respect our rights. They should be changed to be in line with our Constitution, the Children’s Act and the Africans Children Charter.

DRINKING DRUGS AND GAMBLING

Let's start with drinking

Alcohol is freely available to us. It is in our homes, and we can get people to buy it for us. We can even get it from some shebeens. It is a crime to sell alcohol to a child. Places and people who sell alcohol to children must be closed.



"SHEBEENS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES DO NOT MONITOR THE AGE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE THAT GO THERE".

- GRACE



"WE HAVE NOTHING TO DO AFTER SCHOOL AND IN THE EVENING. SOME CHILDREN HAVE TO HANG OUT OUTSIDE BECAUSE THEIR HOMES ARE OVERCROWDED, THEY HAVE NO PRIVACY".

- THANDI

We need more places to do sport, play, hang out, and be children. These places need to be safe, and they need to be easy to get to. When we are busy being children, we tend to stay away from drinking and gambling.



We recommend that:

Shebeens must be monitored and they should lose their licence if they sell alcohol to children.

Our play areas and streets should be lit up and made safe so that we can go out and play or attend events in safety.

Now to drugs.

The drug problem is like a thief in the night it's silent and deadly. Children of all ages are using and abusing drugs as they are easily available even at schools. Where there are

drugs, you find the gangs that sell them. In some areas children miss school and they cannot play outside because it is just too dangerous. Children get shot in clashes between gangs.



"ALMOST EVERY WEEK WE HEAR OF CHILDREN KILLED IN GANG VIOLENCE." - TSHEPO

WORKING AS A CHILD

Child labour is illegal in South Africa. Children should be in school, they should not be working. It robs us of our childhood, and it robs the country of adults that can be more productive. But we are out of school because we are forced to help support the family. You will find us in “spaza” shops, hawking, begging, collecting scrap, or even selling our bodies for money!

Now we need to talk about making money from selling our bodies. Prostitution is illegal in this country, and children should not have sex, right?



“WE SEE MANY CHILDREN WHO ARE OUT OF SCHOOL AND WHO ARE FORCED TO EARN AN INCOME TO SURVIVE, OR TO HELP THE FAMILY. THERE ARE CHILDREN WHO STAND AT TRAFFIC INTERSECTIONS AND AT SHOPPING MALLS WHO BEG”.

- TSHEPO



“THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE SEXUALLY ABUSED AND THEN ARE EVENTUALLY PROSTITUTED BY PEOPLE THEY KNOW. IN SOME CASES, THIS IS DONE BY THE CHILDREN’S OWN PARENTS OR SOMEONE KNOWN TO THE CHILD. CHILDREN HAVE BEEN TARGETED AND GROOMED TO PROVIDE SEXUAL FAVOURS IN EXCHANGE FOR SOMETHING. AND THERE ARE MEN WHO ASK FOR SEXUAL IMAGES AND OTHER SEXUAL FAVOURS FROM CHILDREN VIA SOCIAL MEDIA IN EXCHANGE FOR AIRTIME”.

- GRACE

Some teenagers have “blessers”. These are people that give you nice things if you do sexual favours for them.



We recommend that:

We should not have adult responsibilities we need our childhood.

School support services must be improved and children out of school must be found and brought back into the education systems.

Campaigns in our communities should be run that make child labour known as unlawful.

Child labour inspectors need to know how to handle child labour cases.

CHILDREN FOR SALE

Children are being stolen, and sold. Some go to other countries, some are just moved around in South Africa. They are forced to work, or to be prostitutes, some as young as 14 years. Some are killed for their organs to be sold or used in the “muti”.

GETTING MEDICAL HELP

Here is another case of one law saying one thing and another law saying something else about the same thing. The Integrated School Health Policy says you need permission from a parent for any medical treatment. Yet other laws say we can give permission for ourselves if we are 12, and we understand what is going to happen.

It is most important that hospitals and clinics know this. When we are raped, or pregnant, our parents may not give permission for us to get the help we need because they are afraid or ashamed of what happened.



“LAST YEAR, “A MOTHER POSTED AN ADVERT ON GUMTREE WEBSITE TRYING TO SELL HER BABY. THE CASE WAS REPORTED, AND THE MOTHER ARRESTED”.

- THANDI

“WHAT IF YOU HAVE A BAD INJURY AT 12 AND WANT TO MAKE A DECISION BUT YOU CAN’T, DO YOU HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL 18?”.

-THANDI



We recommend that:

All policies between the law and schools regarding our health must become the same (uniform).

All counsellors must be trained so that they know about our medical and health care matters so they can tell those of us above 12 years what is best for us.

CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY - CAN CHILDREN OF 10 BE BLAMED FOR A CRIME?

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child says that a child that is 12 years or older can understand when they are committing a crime, and is responsible for the crime, if it is proven that they knew what they were doing. In our country, you can be convicted of a crime from the age of 10 years. Our law should follow most of the rest of the world, and change this to 12 years. Even worse than this, we thought it was 14 years! The law is not very clear.

It is very important that children who are in trouble with the law are helped.

There are cases where children end up in jail. That is no place for a child, no matter what he or she did. The Child Justice Act is there to help these children.



We recommend that:

We must follow what other countries have said and set our age of criminal capacity/responsibility at 12 years.

Government must fix all the laws about children so that they all say and mean the same thing.

WHERE WE LIVE

Our homes and families

We live in a country where so many families are headed by children, or single parents. Too often men abandon their families and do not support them financially.



“MANY CHILDREN GROW UP WITHOUT THEIR FATHERS. SOME FATHERS HAVE DIED, SOME ARE IN JAIL, SOME HAVE DISAPPEARED AND MANY SIMPLY ABANDONED THEIR CHILDREN AND ARE NOT SUPPORTING THEM.. TEENAGE PREGNANCY IS ANOTHER CHALLENGE, WITH YOUNG WOMEN HAVING TWO OR THREE BABIES BEFORE REACHING 21 YEARS OF AGE”.

- TSHEPO

Poverty, financial crisis, unemployment and loss of jobs are all things that make it more difficult at home. Families also need to deal with alcohol and drug abuse, violence against women, domestic violence, child abuse and sexual violence in families, and HIV and AIDS.

Alternative care

Sometimes children need other places to stay, because their home is not an option. There are not enough places for children who have nowhere else to go to. So many end up on the streets.

Children living on the streets

Life is tough on the streets, there is no-one to look after you. These children are some of the most vulnerable children in the country.



“STREET CHILDREN USUALLY COMPLAIN ABOUT POLICE AND SECURITY GUARDS THAT HARASS THEM, PICK THEM UP, BEAT THEM UP AND DROP THEM BACK IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES”. - GRACE

CHILDREN WHO ARE REFUGEES, SEEKING ASYLUM AND WHO ARE DISPLACED

Children from other countries come to South Africa as refugees. These children are discriminated against because they are not South African. They do not always have the right documentation and they struggle to get the same treatment as South African children.



We recommend that:

Government must include the training of all officials and workers on the rights of foreigners and their children.

There must be people appointed to monitor anti-discrimination in schools.

Now you know what is going on, we need to talk about the rights of children.

OUR RIGHTS

CIVIL RIGHTS

We have the right to access education, medical, and protection services. But, we are penalised for not having birth certificates, or if we are asylum-seeking, migrant, and refugee children.

OUR BEST INTEREST

Our best interests must always be given priority. The law and its practices must be kept in all situations including family and community settings, and in court proceedings.



We highly recommend that:

All Government workers in their dealings and workings with children action and implement the best interest of the child principle.

In legal cases or disputes the best interest of the child victim should always come first.

Extra care must be taken by the courts when they allow alleged offenders out on bail or on early parole, without considering the best interests of child victims and the safety and best interests of any other children.

ASK US

We may be non-voters but that does not mean we should not be taken into consideration when making decisions. Adults make decisions for us without considering and listening to our feelings. This happens in places like schools, clinics and hospitals where we should be helped. We need to be connected and not pushed aside.



We recommend that:

More needs to be done to enlighten and train all government officials, workers, parents and especially staff at schools to respect the views of children in such a way that their views are heard.

More information and education for parents and community members on “how to listen to children and on respect their views”.

EXPRESSION

In the Constitution, many rights like freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion, association and assembly are explained in general but not how they relate to us.



“OUR PARENTS AND TEACHERS DECIDE WHEN AND HOW WE EXPRESS OURSELVES. WHEN WE EXERCISE OUR RIGHTS, WE ARE CONSIDERED RUDE, DISOBEDIENT, FULL OF IT AND TOO BIG FOR YOUR SHOES. WHEN YOU SPEAK YOUR MIND, EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS WHEN ASKED BY A TEACHER OR PRINCIPAL TO DO SO, THEY OFTEN DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU SAY AND DON'T RESPECT YOUR VIEWS. WE FEEL FORCED TO JOIN CLUBS AND GROUPS THAT THEY THINK ARE GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN. YOU ARE NEVER ASKED IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN, YOU ARE TOLD YOU MUST GO TO CHURCH, PLAY SOCCER OR NETBALL, ETC”.

- THANDI

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

We have the right to privacy.



“PARENTS AND SOMETIMES TEACHERS DON’T BELIEVE THAT CHILDREN NEED PRIVACY. PARENTS BECOME SUSPICIOUS WHEN YOU WANT TO BE ALONE, HAVE YOUR OWN PRIVATE THINGS AND EVEN WRITE IN YOUR DIARY”. – TSHEPO



“TEACHERS AND NURSES SOMETIMES TELL YOUR PARENTS AND EVEN SPEAK ABOUT YOU TO MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. IT IS UNPROFESSIONAL. NOW EVERYONE KNOWS YOUR BUSINESS”. – GRACE



We recommend that:

All persons working with us e.g. government officials, parents, social and community workers, teachers, doctors and nurses at clinics and police, staff in places of safety need to be trained on matters related to our privacy and maintaining and keeping our personal matters confidential.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

We should not be discriminated against. Here are some of the areas that you might not think of as discrimination.



“WE ARE USED TO DISCRIMINATION. IT IS HOW YOU TAKE IT PERSONALLY. SOME PEOPLE DISCRIMINATE – IT IS JUST THE WAY THEY ARE. SOME TEACHERS MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR PREGNANT LEARNERS, FOR EXAMPLE, IF THEY DIDN’T DO THEIR HOMEWORK”. – THANDI



We recommend that:

No child should be isolated/pushed aside or discriminated against for whatever reason they all must have access to education no matter what their economic status is or if they are pregnant.

We need Government to do more to educate and prevent discrimination by all their officials and workers that are responsible for children. Equal opportunities for all.

We should have the best principals and teachers that care for us and work against discrimination in schools. Schools should be our safe haven.

GIRL CHILD

As girls, we are not encouraged to achieve at school, and many girls drop out of school.



“ALL GIRLS HAVE PERIODS. BUT WE ARE TREATED LIKE IT’S A SHAME OR SIN TO HAVE YOUR PERIOD. GIRLS ARE TEASED AND MADE FUN OF BY THEIR PEERS AND TEACHERS. MANY TEACHERS HAVE NO CONSIDERATION WHEN YOU HAVE TO LEAVE THE CLASSROOM BECAUSE YOU STARTED TO BLEED AND FORCE GIRLS TO SIT DOWN UNTIL CLASS ENDS”. – GRACE

“WHY SHOULD BOYS GET CONDOMS FOR FREE, BUT GIRLS HAVE TO PAY FOR SANITARY PADS?”. – THANDI



We face many challenges like peer pressure and lack of privacy in our homes, at school, public places and at our local clinics. We are being bullied by boys and misused/taken advantage of by men/guys.



We recommend that:

All persons working with the girl child need to know how to treat girls with human dignity and how to empower them.

Urgent attention must be given to the range of factors that cause girls to drop out of school.

All boys and male teachers should be informed about natural female biological functions.

All girls should have free sanitary ware.

DISABLED CHILDREN

Children that are physically and mentally challenged are doubly disadvantaged and they should be given extra special care and protection as they are easy prey to abuse.

“DISABLED CHILDREN ARE NOT INCLUDED IN PUBLIC STRUCTURES, THEY ARE OFTEN IGNORED BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND WORKERS”. - TSHEPO

“TOTALLY AGREE! JUST LIKE US THEY SHOULD BE TREATED FAIRLY AND WITH RESPECT. NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT I CAN SEE THAT THEY ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, CRIME AND VIOLENCE”. - TSHEPO



“EVERY DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO BE KEPT SAFE. THEY SHOULD STAY IN CONDITIONS WHERE THEIR NEEDS AND DIGNITY ARE RECOGNISED”. - GRACE

“DISABLED CHILDREN ARE EASY TARGETS FOR BULLIES”. - THANDI



We recommend that:

Differently abled children in school must be adequately provided for so they can access the curriculum as other children do.

Government make places for disabled children more accessible and safe.

Everyone that works with or for children to be made aware of the special needs of disabled children.

POOR CHILDREN

Many children in this country come from poor families. Being poor is a barrier to a better life, poor people, especially poor children do not get the same opportunities as others with more money. They are not taken seriously.

“NOT HAVING ENOUGH FOOD TO EAT OR NOT KNOWING WHEN THEIR NEXT MEAL WILL BE, IS WHAT THEY HAVE TO LIVE WITH. IT IS TRAUMATISING CHILDREN AND CREATES A LOW SELF-ESTEEM IN CHILDREN”. THEY BECOME ANXIOUS AND ARE ALWAYS IN A STRESSFUL STATE. POVERTY INFLUENCES YOU IN A NEGATIVE WAY; CHILDREN WHO LIVE IN POVERTY HAVE TRUST ISSUES AND END UP HAVING ANGER”. - GRACE



FOREIGN CHILDREN



Children of other countries, no matter where they come from have the right to access the same services as South African children. But it is difficult for them if they do not have the right documentation.

“SOME PEOPLE BLAME FOREIGNERS FOR EVERYTHING THAT GOES WRONG AND FOR THE BEHAVIOUR OF PARENTS. WE SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF WHAT LOCALS DO TO FOREIGNERS AND WHAT THEY BELIEVE IN, AS THEIR MIND-SETS ARE DISCRIMINATORY AND XENOPHOBIC”. - THANDI



We recommend that:

Government must include training of all their officials and workers on the rights of foreigners and their children.

There must be people appointed to monitor the situation/ discrimination in schools.

Let's now talk about the right to life.

LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT

We have the right to life. But here are some of the things that do not work.

MALNUTRITION

Many children live in poor families and they do not get enough food. These poor conditions impacts on everything in their lives and their futures. Mothers are not working or are earning very little. Fathers are not contributing and taking care of their children.



“OLDER CHILDREN ARE ASHAMED TO LET THEIR PEERS KNOW THAT THEY GET FOOD FROM THE FEEDING SCHEMES AND WOULD RATHER NOT GO TO COLLECT THE FOOD AND STAY HUNGRY”.
– TSHEPO



We recommend that:

Young mothers are given real help and guidance and more support and education to help them look after their children i.e. provided with shelters if homeless, encouraged to breast feed, have access to baby food at clinics and have regular check-ups and immunisations for their babies . It must become compulsory for fathers to support their children.

Government must be seen to be monitoring the health and nutrition of children in crèches and primary schools.

Poor children must have food security even during the school holidays and that feeding schemes should be used as job creation projects.

Government should launch a serious campaign to reduce the number of unwanted and teenage pregnancies.

The grant system should be seen to help with this problem.



“MANY PARENTS USE THE SOCIAL GRANTS THEY GET FOR THEIR CHILDREN TO BUY CIGARETTES, ALCOHOL AND DRUGS FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR DRUG FRIENDS”.
– GRACE



We recommend that:

A proper reporting or monitoring system needs to be put in place that can prevent parents using the grant on themselves or who lose the money to loan sharks.

Government must help local communities to develop food gardens and support community kitchens for children, teenagers and the elderly.



We see need innovative /creative/clever ways of preventing the abuse of social support grants by parents, loan sharks and those targeting the elderly, making them go into debt.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

We have the right to health and welfare. But there are not enough clinics and hospitals. We must travel very far to get to a clinic or a hospital sometimes. Then we must wait in queues for hours.

We want to get help and advice for sex and pregnancy, but it is difficult.



“SOME STAFF AT THE HOSPITAL ARE VERY RUDE TOWARDS US. THEY DON'T BELIEVE US, IT'S LIKE THEY WANT TO PUT WORDS IN OUR MOUTH. SOME DON'T EVEN ENCOURAGE US; THEY JUST JUDGE US BECAUSE OF OUR SKIN COLOUR. YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO GO TO THE CLINIC OR HOSPITAL TO GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR BODIES. MOST ARE TOO SCARED TO GO BECAUSE OF WHAT PEOPLE WILL SAY, OR THAT OTHERS WILL FIND OUT ABOUT IT – THERE IS A STIGMA”.
– THANDI

EDUCATION

We have the right to education. But when we look at schools we find that in some schools things are really upside down.



“TEACHERS ARE NOT COPING ... THEY ARE STRUGGLING! SOME LACK WILLINGNESS AND PASSION, TEACHER ABSENTEEISM NO CREATIVITY AND NOT EQUIPPED”.
- GRACE

“LEARNERS ROAMING AROUND LEADING TO DRUG TAKING AND GANGSTERISM! WHILE OTHERS HAVE TO TRAVEL LONG DISTANCES”.
- TSHEPO

“LITTLE EDUCATION IS TAKING PLACE !! IT IS NOT OF GOOD QUALITY! LACK OF BOOKS, LIBRARIES, STATIONERY AND MANY SCHOOLS DO NOT HAVE COMPUTER OR SCIENCE LABS”.
- THANDI

We need less children in a classroom.
We need teachers who have passion to see learners achieve.
We need the tools to learn, like textbooks, computers, libraries, and science equipment.



We recommend that:

Teachers must be screened and checked against the Child Protection Register.
Only well-trained, ethical, motivated and committed teachers should be allowed to teach us.

Teachers found guilty of punishable offenses i.e. sexual or corporal must be removed immediately.
Teachers must be supported and assisted to continuously upgrade themselves

PREGNANT LEARNERS




“PREGNANT GIRLS CANNOT CONTINUE WITH THEIR EDUCATION, THEY HAVE TO SIT WITH THE CONSEQUENCE OF A BOY OR MAN MAKING THEM PREGNANT. FAMILIES MAY PUT PRESSURE ON THE BOYS AND MEN, EVEN RAPISTS, TO PAY DAMAGES AS COMPENSATION”.
- TSHEPO

“GIRLS FEEL ASHAMED AND DISGRACED BY FAMILY AND SCHOOL”.
- GRACE

“NO SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO HELP THEM DEAL WITH CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE FUTURE OF THEIR BABIES. GIRLS SOMETIMES AS YOUNG AS 14 SUFFER ABANDONMENT AND SOMETIMES THE BOYS AND/OR MEN DISAPPEAR”.
- THANDI

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Children are still being punished this way in schools.

Some parents still ask that children should be hit at school.



“TEACHERS ARE FRUSTRATED WITH TEACHING AND THE LOW PASS RATE OF LEARNERS. TEACHERS ARE STRESSED AND THEN THEY HIT CHILDREN”.
- TSHEPO



We recommend that: Teachers must not be allowed to smack, hit or abuse us.

LEISURE, RECREATION AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Play, recreation and taking part in cultural activities is important to our development. But it is difficult to do this.



“BECAUSE OF THE DANGERS AROUND OUR HOMES WE CANNOT GO OUT AND PLAY. WE HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE ADULTS ARE HOME!”.
- TSHEPO



“SAME HERE! I AM TOO AFRAID TO STAY BEHIND AT SCHOOL WITH NO SUPERVISIONS WHAT ABOUT BEING ABUSED OR ABDUCTED?”.
- GRACE



“YES AND WHEN WE WANT TO HAVE FUN AFTER SCHOOL THE EQUIPMENT WE NEED IS ALL BROKEN AND UNUSABLE!”.
- THANDI



“WE DON’T HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO MIX WITH OTHER PEOPLES IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND GET TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR CULTURE AND HERITAGES. EVERYBODY IS JUST BUSY TRYING TO SURVIVE”.
- TSHEPO

WITH GREAT RIGHTS COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

“THERE IS A BIG MISUNDERSTANDING WHEN ADULTS TALK ABOUT RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN AND WHAT CHILDREN ACTUALLY THINK THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE. ADULTS THINK IT IS TO BE ALWAYS GOOD, TO LISTEN TO THEM, BE KIND AND TO DO AS TOLD AND STAY OUT OF TROUBLE, NOT TO SMOKE CIGARETTES, DRINK ALCOHOL OR TAKE DRUGS, AND GIRLS MUST NOT HAVE SEX AND FALL PREGNANT”.
- TSHEPO



“BUT WE THINK IT IS TO BE INFORMED AND EMPOWERED, TO HAVE CONFIDENCE AND FEEL GOOD ABOUT WHAT I AM DOING, TO HAVE PRIDE IN MYSELF AND TAKE CARE OF MYSELF AND RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE”. ONE CHILD SAID, “WHEN YOU DON’T HAVE INFORMATION YOU WILL MAKE DECISIONS AND TAKE ACTIONS THAT ARE NOT GOOD”.
- THANDI



We recommend that:

Children must be like adults and also be informed and educated about taking responsibility and expressing ourselves on how to make ourselves heard.

SUMMARY OF ALL THE IMPORTANT AREAS THAT MUST GET URGENT ATTENTION FOR US TO ENJOY A HAPPY CHILDHOOD AND MAKE US STRONG ADULTS

Now let's talk about what we can do about everything we have said.



1

The first area are the laws that say different things about children. This should be fixed as soon as possible. So many of the problems are because of these differences.



2

The second area seems to be the lack of information. As children, we do not all know our rights. Adults do not know the rights of children. Government officials and workers do not know the rights of children. All of us need to be more informed about the rights of children. And Government must provide more information to everyone that works with or takes care of children.



5

The fifth area is money. Government must root out corruption. Too much money is being wasted and not enough is set aside to help children.



6

The sixth area is making places where children are found safe like working streetlights and public transport to school.



Finally, open libraries that we need resourced with working equipment and provide us with recreation centres that are safe for us to use.

3

The third area is training and making sure that the right things are being done. Officials and workers need to be trained to work with children. They must be monitored, and checked. Teachers, medical staff and the police need help to serve children better. We understand they are over worked and have a lot of stress, but they should not take it out on children. There needs to be inspectors the check to see that children are not being mistreated in places like clinics.



4

The fourth area is enforcing the law. Shebeens that sell alcohol to children must be closed. Illegal circumcision schools must be closed. People found practicing "ukuthwala" must be prosecuted according to the laws they are breaking.



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CHANGING THE WAY SOCIETY TREATS ITS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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