

# **DRAFT REPORT**

## **THE 10<sup>th</sup> NELSON MANDELA CHILDRENS PARLIAMENT**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament was established to celebrate the values, principles and commitment of the late former President of the Republic, Mr. Nelson Mandela to the children of SA, by giving children meaningful opportunities to participate, direct and influence decisions made on their behalf. The Parliament enhances the Children's right to participate and decision-making including the right to express their opinions and to be heard. Furthermore, the Parliament is aimed at advancing the promotion, realisation and protection of the rights of children to ensure that children can actively contribute to the development of a democratic society and the realisation of their rights.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Nelson Mandela's Parliament was held on the 08<sup>TH</sup> October 2021 in Johannesburg, Gauteng province under the theme: Accountability to enhance the voices and rights of children during COVID-19 and beyond. The Parliament hosted children and youth from all 9 provinces of South Africa to engage Government and partners on the issues affecting children including the conditions and circumstances of children and youth in South Africa. This included amongst others, a reflection of the work that Government in partnership with Civil Society has done through the development and implementation of legislation to promote and protect the rights of children as well as increasing their access to basic services. **In total, fifty children which included five from each province and the previous child ambassadors attended the physical session.** Other children from Provinces were connected virtually to afford them the opportunity to participate in the Parliament.

## 2. BACKGROUND

In 1995 South Africa under the leadership and presidency of Mr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and the first democratic government in South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Five years later on 7 January 2000, the country ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of

and UNICEF (UNRWC). Moreover, the rights of children are firmly entrenched in Section 28 of the Constitution and significant legislation, such as the Children’s Act 38 of 2005.

This Children’s Parliament was initially planned to take place on 18 July of every year, but because of other logistical challenges, for the past few years, it was hosted during October being Social Development Month. It is also a principle that this session, inclusive of other child participation programmes, should not interfere with the schooling calendar. Beginning of October every year schools are closing and it is in this context that, October has been an ideal month for the hosting of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Parliament.

The hosting of the Children’s Parliament rotated across all provinces to create an opportunity for the children of South Africa to participate equally. Every year, children elect their leaders, the Provincial Child Ambassadors to represent them. The hosting was done in partnership with the Premier’s Office and the Provincial Legislatures in the respective Provinces **including partners** as follows:

Year	Host
2011	The first children’s Parliament was inaugurated in Gauteng
2012	Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature
2013	Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature
2014	National Parliament hosted the Children’s Parliament as part of celebrating 20 years of our Constitution, freedom and democracy.
2015	Free State Provincial Legislature
2016	North West Provincial Legislature
2017	Northern Cape Provincial Legislature
2018	Limpopo Provincial Legislature

### 3. PURPOSE

#### 4. PREPARATORY PROCESS

The provincial workshops were held in all provinces to support provinces in preparing children towards the National Parliament. Thirty children per province participated in the provincial workshops and four child representatives were selected per province to attend the national parliament physically, while the remaining of the children were encouraged join the session virtually. The provincial preparatory sessions were held as follows;

Province	Dates
North West	15-16 Sept 2021
Limpopo	17-18 Sept 2021
N. Cape/W. Cape	24-25 Sept 2021
Gauteng/Mpumalanga/Free State/Eastern Cape and KZN	1-2 Oct 2021

**The purpose of the workshops was mainly to assist the children to;**

- i. Understand the parliament theme and what it means to children;
- ii. Promote discussions on the NPAC, the Children's Manifesto and the Child Participation Framework;
- iii. Create a better understanding of our democracy and child participation and;
- iv. To share information on the different parliamentary roles and what to expect during and post parliament (both on a Provincial and National level).

#### 3.2. ARRIVAL OF CHILDREN AND 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY ACTIVITIES

The children from all provinces arrived on 06 October 2021. The children were accompanied by **one** care giver and **one** representative from the provincial ORC.

Once the children have settled, they were welcomed and consulted on the draft child rights advocacy strategy and the draft State Party reports to the AU and the UN. The children were later briefed about the proceedings for the following day and ground rules to be adhered to during the entire process were set.

### **3.3. REHEARSALS AND NOMINATION OF 2021 CHILD PARLIAMENTARIANS**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> October, the children commenced with the rehearsals in preparations for the main Parliament. This was followed by the nomination of the 2021 child Parliamentarians. The nominated 2021 Child Ambassadors were as follows;

- ❖ Mary-ann Pretorius - North West
- ❖ Kayla Netshimbe -Gauteng
- ❖ Mpho Mathivha- Free State
- ❖ Kelebogile mosegedi- Northern Cape
- ❖ Annah Theko-Mpumalanga
- ❖ Elovuyo Makohliso – Eastern Cape
- ❖ Muhammad Hamza - Western Cape
- ❖ Mmeli Khawula- KZN
- ❖ Kgabo kola-Limpopo

## **4. THE CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT SITTING**

### **4.1. Opening remarks by the Acting Director-General – Mr. Linton Mchunu**

In his opening remarks, Mr. Mchunu officially welcomed the children to the 10<sup>th</sup> Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament. He further outlined that the;

- Sitting is hosted in October during the Social Development month to ensure that there is not disruptions to children's schooling.
- Parliament coincides with the government planning cycle, which therefore, offer an opportunity for government to look at various measures such as the provision of budgets to ensure the children's issues are advanced.

- This Parliament was hosted in Gauteng 10 years ago with a full rotation having taken place in all provinces.
- Government must reflect as to whether the resolutions taken during the Parliament, the Children's manifesto and outcomes of the Parliament are the implemented.
- Parliament promotes child participation to ensure that children participate in all matters that affect them. Through the developed child participation framework which will be rolled out in all provinces, the Department aims to ensure the coordination of child right issues and to promote child participation at local, district and provincial level.
- Lastly, He encouraged the children positively use the opportunity granted to them through the Parliament and to follow learn from the previous ambassadors who have benefitted from the programme.

#### 4.2. Reports by outgoing ambassadors

The outgoing ambassador from **Limpopo province** indicated that together with the outgoing President of the Parliament, Mr. Freddy Ramonyai, other child ambassadors were engaged in various campaigns such as the back to school campaign, armed force galler dinner, awareness campaigns focusing on self-realisation and campaigns aimed motivating school learners and empowering them on leadership skill and also educating children on the processes relating to the Parliament.

Representing the **Free State Province** was Zaeem Zakhura. He indicated that during his tenure he experienced challenges with reaching most of the goals set for the year, this basically due to the Covid-19 pandemic which made it difficult for him to interact with other learners. However he was grateful for the assistance he got from the office of the premier which involved him in the programme to distribute food parcels to the needy families and communities. The Department of social Development also assisted with the founding of an initiative to provide food hampers in the Community.

**Dine Mankwala** representing **Mpumalanga** reported that she was involved in the giving back to the community campaign. She also participated in the Nelson Mandela 67 minutes in July 2020 where she was working collectively with other community members to give back to the community and helping other people in need. She also had an interview with the J A Nelson Mandela international day and featured in the DSD newsletter. She also participated in the amendment of the children's Bill. She also had an interview with UNICEF where she was reported on the activities she has undertaken as the child ambassador. She was also interviewed by Ligwalagwala FM regarding the issues faced by children which included amongst others, peer pressure. She was also a programme director during the opening of the children's home in Emalahleni. She experienced challenges whereby she was not informed on time about the activities that she had to participate in and also the minimal involvement in other child related activities. Lastly, she thanked the opportunity offered to her through the Parliament and indicated that *"I had was a great journey, not an easy one though but one with great experience"*

Representing **the Eastern Cape** Province was Simamkele Jack. He indicated that in the province they experience a lot of issues affecting children and to address these, they formed a social media group together with other child ambassadors to address challenges faced by children. He attended a Covid 19 report back session hosted the DSD Deputy Minister where they were offered the opportunity to voice out the issues affecting children. He also attended the healthy relations session with the Eastern Cape men's movement and made a speech on the challenges contributed by men in the community and how these can be addressed. He also participated in the development of the National Plan of Action for children including the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UNCRC.

The **KZN** outgoing ambassador, Siviwe Mbuyane attended zoom and physical meetings with the Ministers and Parliamentarians including radio interviews to discuss issues relating to children. She also self-initiated campaigns to advocate for mental health and climate change. She further had a close working relationship with Save the Children South Africa whereby she was involved in delivering food parcels. She had radio interviews to encourage children to fight for their mental well-being

during the Covid -19 pandemic including, participated in the amendment of the children's amendment bill. She was concerned that child ambassadors were not included in the programme. She felt that the work done by child ambassadors was not appreciated and credited, especially not being informed on times that their hard work in relation to the allocated thematic areas will not be recognised. She said "I stand before you today with a very painful heart, I looked at the programme today and I cried. As I am standing before you now, I am trying my best not to cry, but I'm hurting".

Representing the **Western Cape** was Ayakha Tono who explained that 2020 was a very tough year due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. As a result most of their programmes had to be put on hold. They as child ambassadors have also struggled to get funding for their programmes, however, they were grateful for the support they received from the Western Cape Child Commissioner and the provincial ORC. On the 19th of December, despite the challenges experienced, she managed in 2019 December she attended a Parliamentary sitting where she was offered the position of the child ambassador representing children with special needs. She was also involved in the donation of a grocery to the needy family on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. She visited a children's home together with the Kwadisa foundation where they focused on a feed a child day. During the visit, she was offered the opportunity to educate children in the home about their rights and responsibilities. She also donated 60 sanitary pads to an orphanage home to support young girls in need of sanitary towels. There we also plan to launch a campaign to educate children about their rights and responsibilities but due to the Covid 19 pandemic, this programme was not launched. The Western Cape child Parliamentarians were also offered the opportunity to become child monitors. Through these programmes, they managed to participate in the child protection week, however, to date they have not received a report back on the implementation of the resolutions of the campaign.

Otshepeng Babaile from the **North West** province described her journey as the child ambassador as a rocky, painful and a one filled with tears and lots of ups and downs. Through the journey, she experienced more downs than ups however she managed to found her own organisation called rainbow child. The organisation already has a



Following on face book. As the child ambassadors, they have joined the MS foundation and together they have donated 500 pairs of school shoes for the past 8 years in Mahikeng. She hosted the children's programme at the local radio station in Mahikeng and was invited by the station to share her experience of her life as a child during the Covid 19 pandemic. As a child ambassador, she experienced a challenges whereby she was not supported in her initiatives. A lot of promises about allocations of budget to support her initiatives including plans of her participation in the Legislature were never fulfilled. She likened these promises to the ones that the politicians normally make. Countless emails of ideas and proposals fell in to deaf ears and were never responded to, this disadvantaged all her initiatives.

The outgoing **Northern Cape** Ambassador, Ceyzer Lynburgh indicated she tried his best to do everything all be himself. He thought that the title of an ambassador will automatically open doors for him and he never reached out for help in term of funding and sponsors, unfortunately that was not the case. He still a lot of goals and when he was about with his first project, the country was put on lock down due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Unfortunately all the plans were not fulfilled. However he was invited to webinars and was involved in various radio interviews.

Lastly, the outgoing child ambassador for **Gauteng** province, Thato Mhlungu indicated that she feels sad as an ambassador because her term as an ambassador was not the best but rather a very bumpy one. She detailed the lack of support from the province as a painful and challenging experience. Despite this, she managed to participate in the Nelson Mandela day and the campaign of violence where they went to different malls to educate parents on how they can positively discipline their children. She also participated in the violence prevention forum workshop where as children were tasked to come with a definition of violence and how it affects the lives of children. They also partnered with various stakeholders to deal with violence related issues.

#### 4.2. Thematic presentations – incoming ambassadors

### **THEME 1: MENTAL HEALTH**

## Defining mental health

Mental health is the wellness of one's brain while Mental illness is the opposite. Mental health is caused by a series of negative events that build up to store trauma. Here are some of the problems and solutions we came up with.

## Associated problems

Mental health of children is neglected because adults think children cannot have mental illnesses.

Mental illness is caused by one's environment, e.g. abusive households, hostile schooling environment.

Children do not know who to tell about their problems because there is a lack of support from parents, teachers and communities.

Confidentiality is not being respected as teachers, social workers or trusted adults do not protect our information when we open up to them.

One of the main contributing factors is school, especially academic pressure and favouritism in teachers. Bullying also contributes, especially cyber bullying.

Another contributing factor is physical health. Children who are living with chronic illnesses are more often living with depression or anxiety as well. Differently abled children are also bullied into depression and suicide.

The pandemic has also contributed to mental illness, e.g. loss of family members, friends, and financial stress leading to violence in homes. Children have not been able to report as the lockdown did not allow people to leave their place of residence.

## Proposed Resolutions

Ensure and enforce confidentiality by means of binding contracts between social workers, teachers, Teacher Learner Organisations and children to protect children's privacy as stated in the Protection of Personal Information Act.

Have workshops and training to end the stigmatization of mental illness and to educate on the topic, specifically for parents and teachers.

Department of Education to work with educational psychologists to help advise children on school and to handle the pressure and workload.

Have guidance counsellors in ALL schools.

Mental health should be in the South African school syllabus as a whole topic, with the different types of mental illnesses as subtopics.

Have periodic check-ups in schools to avoid undiagnosed mental illnesses.

Have more schools that cater for children living with mental illness, e.g. Autism, ADHD, DID, etc.

## **THEME 2: CLIMATE CHANGE**

*Presented by:*

### **Defining climate change**

Climate change is a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change in apparent from the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric levels of Carbon produced by the use of fossil fuels.

### **Challenges attributed to climate change**

*Deforestation-* which is the cutting of trees in which help reduce the amount of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere with CO<sub>2</sub> being the leading greenhouse gas this means there is going to be increased levels of global warming and hence climate change.

*Food insecurity-* children lose their access to food because of the ever changing environment and soil causing the soil to become barren and crops are forever being destroyed.

*Transportation-* climate change causes flooding and earthquakes which can cause children unable to travel to school and they are unable to get access to the school feeding scheme which the only source of nourishment for some children.

*Lack of infrastructure-* our bridges and shelter are not built to survive and withstand ever changing climates hence children are unable to travel to school because there are floods and our children with disabilities specifically those

communities to wheelchairs aren't able to travel when there are landslides and floods which close off pavements and roads.

*Shelter-* our houses are poorly built leaving us vulnerable to the environment and ever changing climate. Children are left without proper housing because of flooding and tornados which is an infringing on their right to shelter.

*Pollution-* climate change is caused by many factors one of them being global warming and global warming is formed directly by air pollution. This pollution can be accredited mostly to the burning of fossil fuels.

*Droughts-* as much there is flooding in areas in some areas the opposite is true for some areas they are left without water and this cannot be reality because humans are dependent on water for survival.

## Recommendations and possible solutions to help alleviate the impact of climate change

*Deforestation-* The government must implement a policy which forces these logging (deforestation) companies to plant 5 tree in the place of one we cannot be stealing resources and leave it at that we also need to give back to nature.

*Food insecurity-* we need to build more greenhouses around the country and specifically in problem areas to make sure that plants are protected and they produce adequate food people all around. This could be a chance to involve the community and allow them to help build these greenhouses. Many businesses such as large shopping businesses already have networks of trucks which deliver food all over the country involving them here would insure better transportation of food all over the country.

*Transportation-* we believe that this solution should have already been long implemented by now because many children live far away from school and with the added factor of ever changing climate which could make their journeys that much harder we need a source of transport which could be a bus or taxi for our children.

*Lack of infrastructure-* our government need to be building these bridges and working with architects to make sure that our buildings are resistant to climate changes.

*Shelter-* the government has a responsibility to provide proper, sustainable housing to the people because we cannot have children who are without shelter. This is in support of the section 24 of the constitution which clearly states that everyone has a right to have access to adequate housing.

*Pollution-* A stricter carbon tax need to needs to be put on businesses that produce carbon and any kind of greenhouse gases. We also need to shift our energy needs towards more renewable sources of energy such as solar and hydropower.

*Droughts-* Basic and sustainable water systems need to be put in place involving affordable resources such as Jojo tanks to make sure that no communities are without water. It is necessary that we involve local and international businesses to help fundraise and provide any resources that they can.

We need the Departments of forestry and the department of agriculture to be involved in these processes. As the department of forestry will help with the deforestation plan and the department of agriculture will be involved with the project with the greenhouses.

The children of the parliament need constant updates from the government about what policies and strategies have been implemented well and we will also consult with the government on what new strategies we want to be implemented.

### **THEME 3: GENDER AND NON DISCRIMINATION AND INCLUSION**

*Presented by:*

#### **Defining Gender, Non Discrimination and Inclusion**

**Gender** refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy as well as relationships with one another. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time however

gender can also be influenced by that society. **Gender equality**, also known as sexual equality or equality of the sexes is the state of access to resources and opportunities regardless of the gender including economic participation and decision making and the state of valuing different opinions, aspirations and needs regardless of the gender.

## Challenges

Many children especially the “girl child” are being forced to clean their houses or washing their dishes and even looking after their siblings. These are perceived to be “girl’s duties”. These chores are seen as more feminine thing to accomplish meaning that it's not seen as a boy’s job to wash dishes, to actually sweep the house or to cook meals and that is because of patriarchy as well as how this always follows up through different generations. On the other hand boys are often forced to do hard labour activities such as gardening and fixing equipment.

Family, Schools and peers affecting gender

Children are victims of sexual exploration/rape/sexual harassment. Many girls of young age are forced to marry older men which violates a majority of their rights which include their right to survival, protection as well as their development. This also leads to psychological trauma. These girls end up dropping out of school because of the marriage that they were forced into which also deprives their right to education.

The practice of Ukuthwala which is early forced child marriages which is basically abducting and forcing a child to marry a man older than themselves, this is done by many families because it is an easier way of getting money. There’s also adults tricking children into sleeping with them or touching them in inappropriate places so it places the issue of child pornography. Young children who are girls are more exposed to child pornography because of the adult males they are married to. Boys get raped as well but police officers are ignorant of their

complaint if not ashamed and be little the boy for such a thing happening so it is seen more as a girls issue despite the fact that boys file cases as well.

Inequality shows in our rape cases and the way they capture the statistics of female rape case reports shows that there are no stats on the rape cases of male children which is in need of amendment. Another issue is that girls are forced to participate in virginity tests, this further discriminates those who are not virgins because they may have been raped and those who are still virgins are susceptible to human trafficking during those tests. There are many other issues to be considered in virginity tests such as whether they are doing it safely and hygienically so as to prevent unnecessary diseases from coming into contact with the child, whether it is done in a safe environment or whether the child is comfortable with what is being done to them. However, because of the force that the child's family is putting on the matter which goes back to patriarchy and stereotypes as well as it following society norms.

Africa as a culture is unique, diverse and beautiful but there are practices that are harmful to the boy child. There are a number of boys who are forced to attend those initiation schools moreover some are even forced to go at a younger age than others which could harm them more seriously because they have a less likely chance at surviving in those harsh conditions. The initiation progress itself may be unhygienic as well which also goes back to the virginity tests. Still going on with the initiation the boys might not even return from the initiation. Culture is used to gain funds because money is needed for such an initiation forgetting the safety of the child and his right to participation and even if they had the way of going to the hospital they would be discriminated against because going to the hospital or not getting circumcised at all goes against their culture which majority of the time cannot be over ruled.

Discrimination in classrooms whereby boys are seen as rude, uncooperative and just lazy yet girls are seen as more intelligent and well-mannered and respectful.



There are also cases where some schools refuse girls wearing anything besides skirts instead of pants throughout the seasons which is discriminating them because their opinions on what they want to wear and feel comfortable in are not taken into account. Ukuthwala needs a law against it stating that it is a criminal offence and people participating in such need to be prosecuted and further trails on to the Department of South African Police Services because this is not practiced in a city as much as it's practiced in rural area's such as villages and going with the Department of Social Development would work as well. The biggest step would be for government to work with traditional leaders to confront such but then again it's those same leaders who propose such methods towards their children.

## THEME 4: EDUCATION

*Presented by:*

### Defining education

Education is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and morals, beliefs as well as habits. Education methods include teaching, training, storytelling, discussion and directed research. Education takes place under the guidance of qualified teachers/ educators.

### Challenges

According to the constitution each and every child has the right to education, but many are deprived this right. Many challenges children face each and every day.

These include:

*Inequality* – Teachers discriminating against children because of their IQ level. This is also a form of favouritism.

*Uneducated teachers* – Teachers who are not skilled. Teachers who lack knowledge of their subject.

*Mobile classrooms* – They are not child-friendly. Children cram up in these classrooms and are at the risk of getting Covid-19.



*Online learning* – Many children do not have technological devices, data or proper resources for online learning. Some do not even have electricity. Many students have dropped out of school because they can't get access to school.

*Sanitation*- In rural areas there are still pit toilets. These are not child-friendly. Children could get infections or even fall into the pit.

*Violence*- Educators being violent to students; and students being violent to other students.

*Vandalism* of classrooms as well as Gangsterism in schools.

*Children with disabilities*- They do not have access to Early Childhood Development programmes for stimulation and development. Teachers are not equipped when it comes to teaching in South African Sign Language. There is a lack of accessibility for children who use wheelchair. There is a huge risk of infection for children with disabilities in school settings some use a tactile form of communication.

## Resolutions

The government should develop Early Childhood Programmes for children with disabilities in order for them to have stimulation and acquire South African Sign Language.

There should be workshops for parents and educators in order for them to be more educated on how to embrace children with disabilities.

There should be regular visits by SAPS to check-up at schools so as to avoid substance abuse on the school premises as well as checking for weapons.

Schools should have ramps in order to accommodate learners with disabilities.

Regular visits by the officials from the Department of Education to monitor if the right to education is practiced.

Regular inspections of school buildings to ensure that children have child-friendly classrooms.

Improvement on sanitation by building proper toilets. The distribution of sanitary pads for girls at schools once a month.

More libraries should be opened in order to help students/ children get access to online learning.

A lack of education around teenage pregnancy, which leads to teenage pregnancy.

A lack of sex education is a contributing factor to the pregnancy of teens as well as the spread of HIV & Aids.

## Improvements

More school for special needs children have been built.

A pupil has the right to be taught in their own home language. Back in the day children were forced to learn in Afrikaans.

There are feeding schemes which help a lot of children who go to school hungry.

Some schools provide masks as well as hand sanitizer for learners.

There has been recognition for children with disabilities when it comes to school excellence.

Bursaries and scholarships are issued which help a lot of children stay in school.

Many schools have sports programmes which help learners to showcase their talents.

## **THEME 5: CO-ORDINATION AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

*Presented by:*

### Defining coordination

Coordination was defined as the organization of two or more departments founded for different purposes to be able to work together.

### Challenges and gaps

Lack of implementation for departmental mechanisms with prioritizing the rights of children.

Inclusivity- not explaining properly the laws of South Africa to all the children.

Children need prioritization. If the youth, women and children with disabilities are prioritized then so why not children?.

## What has been done? e.g. by government officials, political leaders, civil society?

Feeding schemes in schools were established.

Children's forums were established to enhance the voices of children.

The government failed to address and solve most issues faced by children.

The government is trying to implement the legislation to children through NMCP and other forums but how many learners really know about these forums?

## SOLUTIONS

Children should be moved to the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. It focuses on facilitating the implementation of the National Development Plan as it aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. As it has been proven that children are way less than adults here in South Africa. The laws implemented should be monitored.

## **THEME 6: CHILD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES**

*Presented by:*

### Defining Child friendly communities

A supportive, educational community which is inclusive, healthy, friendly, protective and right based. Which promotes inclusiveness, gender sensitivity, tolerance, dignity and child empowerment.

### Challenges

Absence of child advocacy and participation.

Due to COVID-19 there has been lack of outdoor physical activities.

Female children are regarded as less competent.

Destitute access to quality social services.

Shortfall of participation in family, cultural, community and social life.

We as children can't express our opinions and influence decisions on matters that affect us.

Child friendly communities being implemented in terms of parks, which are not built in safe areas as government just wants to get things done instead of doing them the right way.

## Resolutions

Increase advocacy impact and give a stronger voice to us.

Integrate alternative programmes where can voice our opinions without fear or prejudice.

Have awareness campaigns in communities to inform, educate all members of communities about the value of children and how they are of paramount importance.

Municipalities to consult children when planning and building communities.

Ensure we are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse in our communities.

Ensure we live in safe secure and clean environments.

Ensure that quality inspections are made and children are consulted when building or developing child friendly communities to ensure child safety.

You see child friendly communities by parks, playgrounds and recreation centres where they can play, be happy and have fun without feeling scared and unsafe.

## **THEME 7: CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION**

*Presented by:*

### Defining Violence Against Children

Violence Against Children is the physical, emotional, verbal psychological and sexual abuse that children experience everyday of their lives.

### Problems and challenges

Corporal punishment is prohibited in schools and at home but is still practiced.

Parents and teachers still use corporal punishment as form of discipline method.

Although it is prohibited especially in homes, the law has not been yet passed down or harmonized rather which makes it difficult for police officers to make any arrests and the violence continues.

The religious and cultural norms also promote or rather perpetuate Violence against children.

Corruption also is a challenge, because now we lacking police officers that can work with the children when they report their issues

Violence Against Children that takes place at in special schools, where you would find teachers hitting children for being themselves or when they can't grasp a particular content.

The high rates of child abduction.

Unresolved issues between parents which affect children because you find out that because maybe I'm child and my mother has unresolved issues with my father and I happen to look exactly like my father, then she hits me simply because I constantly reminding her of the man that birthed me.

## Solutions or recommendation

The banning of corporal punishment law at homes should be legalized so that it is much easier when children report the issues at the police station, then the police officials can do their work.

The government needs to strengthen reporting mechanisms where children are able to freely report abuse without fear.

There is grave need for consequence management for police officials that never really act in the best interest of the child, in this regard the protection the child.

There is also grave for workshops where learners and teacher, parents and children are taught about the positive discipline methods.

Our traditional and religious leaders need to be also consulted.

Most importantly children themselves too need to start reporting cases.

## **THEME 8: CHILD RIGHTS AND BUSINESS**

## Defining business

By 'business' we mean as including all business enterprises, both national and transnational, regardless of size, sector, location, ownership and structure. This includes where there is buying and selling of goods, provision of services, where products are made, and there is a profit being gained.

How businesses recognise a need for explicit guidance on what it means for businesses to respect and support children's rights. Business directly influences environment. Environment is the surrounding or conditions in which a person operate. It consists of physical, emotional and financial contributions. Business influences all three aspects and thus highly influence the environment that we live in.

## Challenges

### Media

Advertisements are not celebrating and embracing the diversity that we have in our country. We don't often see children with disabilities on billboards, or children with albinism, children who are not considered to be of the conventional and euro-centric view of beauty, this makes them feel excluded and not represented when they can't see a person that looks like them in the media. This increases body shaming in our communities, lowers children's self-esteem, increases disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia, Binge-eating disorder and many others.

Advertisements about alcohol are being aired during prime time when many of the children in SA are sitting down with their families. Alcohol is being portrayed in a way that entices and lures the youth to buy. The brewery industry knows that their target market is the youth and children, the law of "No alcohol for people under the age of 18. Drink responsibly" is not actually being monitored, implemented and regulated.

Social media plays a huge role in our lives, we literally live in our phones. The things we are exposed to on social media shape our mentality and mind-set. We see explicit, derogatory, and offensive content and material on these platforms.

## Mining

There are many mines located in or near local areas that pollute the rivers that we collect water to drink at, the land that the community members live on. Children tend to drink or swim in these infected water bodies. Not only are the rivers polluted, but the air and the environment is not clean and affects the health of the children.

In these times of COVID-19, researchers found that 3million South Africans lost their jobs, while of those who managed to keep their jobs, 1.5million did not have an income. These are mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, who have to put food on the table.

## Liquor

There are taverns located near schools and residential areas despite the liquor laws and the ruling by different Liquor Boards across the provinces. The National Liquor Authority and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Parents that are sending their children to purchase alcohol for them are encouraging drinking as children are naturally curious people and will want to taste and experiment with what they are exposed to.

Establishments that sell alcohol are selling to minors, these include hotels, taverns, and shebeens. This problem is mostly in our township communities, where there are also unlicensed businesses are running.

## Recommendations

Businesses should practice inclusivity, and diversity in their marketing strategies. Making child-friendly advertisements is an example.

Government should closely monitor what is being aired during prime time, have policies and laws that restrict explicit content being aired during this time. For example, there are little to n advertisements 'selling' cigarettes, and this doesn't affect their sales.

Government should enlist various NGOs and NPOs that advocate and speak about social media its impact on you as a child, how you can use it to benefit yourself, and/or what to avoid.

The Department of Mineral Resources is responsible for all the mines in South Africa and are therefore held accountable as per this year's theme. They should regulate and suggest ways that waste products can be disposed of safely, working with the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries.

There should be proper and dignified severance packages that are given to workers should a business need to retrench. Businesses should also be encouraged to have bursaries or rather education funds for the worker's children. The police should patrol and close unlicensed establishments in our township and rural areas.

Every person purchasing alcohol should show their ID.

Parent workshops should be a norm where parents are made aware of their roles and how to raise good citizens of society. Having social workers and police officers in and around our township and rural areas is a good way of having safe communities and environments that are conducive and kind to the young, developing songs.

Government should monitor businesses roles and enforce the suggestions on the General Comment No 16.

## THEME 9: COORDINATION OF CHILD PARTICIPATION

*Presented by:*

### Defining child participation

Child participation is the active involvement of children in the decision making and voicing issues that affect them in their day-to-day lives.

### Child participation at national level

#### **Budget Allocation**

The government does not inform children enough in terms of the budget allocated specifically for children.



The children never get a feedback on how the budget was used.

## **Education**

During the Covid-19 lockdown the children felt excluded in the decision making of the closing and reopening of the schools.

Children with disabilities were also excluded in the decision making of the closing and reopening of the schools. Their right to child participation was deprived.

## **Involvement of members of Parliament**

The members of Parliament never attend children's Parliament. The children feel that there is a huge gap between them and the relevant members of parliament who should attend to their issues.

## **Resolutions**

The government needs to start being more transparent with the children in terms of consultations.

Ministers should attend children's parliament

There should be more inclusivity of children with disabilities in the decision of school related issues as they face more challenges than we can ever imagine.

## **CHILD PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL LEVEL (COMMUNITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES)**

### **Budget from Municipalities**

The municipalities never have consultation meetings with the children to inform them about the budget allocated for them. They are never told about how the money is spent at the municipality level.

### **Lack of information**

Children cannot participate as they are supposed to because they are not fully equipped with the knowledge of the budget allocated to meet their needs at a local level.

## Local meetings

Community leaders never invite children when they host community meetings whilst they involve children's issues in those meetings, as such children's voices are not being heard at a local level.

## Resolutions

The government should educate the Municipalities about how they can better consult children regarding the budget allocated to them.

There should be a proper follow up of how the budget has being used up and as children should be informed about that.

The government should education the community leaders about child participation so that children can start voicing out their issues at local level.

## CHILD PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS

Learners were not consulted about the rotational learning system during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Children with disabilities continue to be excluded in the important discussions that affect their lives.

During the Covid-19 lockdown period, child participation was not practiced by the teachers because in other school learners had to write major subjects in a day without the children being asked if they will be able to cope with the load.

## RESOLUTIONS

The Minister of Education in particular must start being more transparent with the children leaders of the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament (NMCP) as they are the leaders of millions of children in South Africa.

## 5. REMARKS BY THE UNICEF COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE: MS. CHRISTINE MUHIGANA

## 6. Remarks by the CEO of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund: Ms.

### Konehali Gugushe

In her remarks, the NMCF CEO, acknowledge the opportunity and indicated that the level of engagement by the child Parliamentarians shows the importance of the Parliament. She further outlined that;

- The Parliament celebrated that legacy and vision of UTata Nelson Mandela to offer children the platform to, not only be heard but listened to.
- As people working with children, we need to acknowledge and recognise the lamentations by the children during the session.
- In 2019, the children's manifesto was launched and those issues are still being talked about even today.
- It is a sad occasion that as professionals we are portrayed as using children for publicity and only when it's convenient to us.
- The NMCF desires to and commitment to continue to amplify the voices of children and to stand on their behalf in platforms where they may not necessarily be present in order to raise the voices of children.
- The NMCF encourages the level of participation and welcome the passion because it means that children take responsibility for the issues that affect them.
- It is therefore the responsibility of the organisation to ensure that children's issues cannot be ignored.
- The professionals need to reflect on how they can assist children in elevating their issues to become better members of society so that the children can be able to lead the country.
- The review of the achievements of the past 10 years was supported and committed that the review will be done to ensure that positives, weaknesses and gaps are acknowledged.
- The collective engagements by various partners in addressing children's issues was supported and it was acknowledged that other stakeholders needs to be on board.

## **7. REMARKS BY A REPRESENTATIVE FROM SAVE THE CHILDREN SOUTH AFRICA: MR. EMMANUEL MODIKOANE**

**In his remarks, Mr. Modikoane;**

- Indicated that Save the Children is delighted to be a partner in the hosting of the Parliament.
- Acknowledged the challenges brought by the Covi-19 pandemic which amongst others disrupted the hosting of the Parliament for 2020.
- Stated that child participation is critical and acknowledge that partners need to re think the hosting of the Parliament to amongst others capacitate and empower children to claim their rights.
- Indicated that more platforms for discussions other than the Parliament needs to be created to address the different concerns raised by children in different platforms.
- The nine child participations requirements needs to guide the processes of engagement, addressing and providing solutions to the issues raised by children.
- Lastly, he thanked the children for showing urgency, and for their knowledge and skills on how children's issues should be addressed.

## **8. REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, GAUTENG PROVINCE: MS. MORAKANE MOSUPYOE**

**In her remarks the MEC,**

- Indicated that that the children must develop the children's Parliament must have the rules book this will assist with decreasing the many point of orders in the Parliament as many of these were related to the rules.
- The rules will also assist in holding the executive accountable. In this regard she indicated that that she will be available to assist with the development of such.
- Encouraged the new ambassadors to work with the old ambassadors in order to share experience.

- She agreed that mental health professionals should form part of the teaching fraternity and encouraged the child ambassadors to petition the DPSA and they are responsible for the approval of departmental structures.
- Encourage children to petition government in matters relating to children.
- Advised that the Parliament must be elevated to resemble the national parliament and that the children's parliament must not only be used as a platform for raising issues but rather must offer a platform to hold politicians accountable.
- DSD values the legacy of the former President Nelson Mandela and government need to ensure that children's voices matters.
- Committed to support the initiatives of making Sign language to form part of the curriculum.
- Committed to further discuss with the senior managers to further discuss how to implement the manifesto and to also see how the manifesto can be included in the programmes of government. Encourage the incoming child ambassadors to hold government accountable on the matter.
- Further encouraged children to advocate for the enforcement of laws that are aimed to protect children to ensure that children are protected.

## **9. KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: HON. LINDIWE ZULU**

In her remarks, the Honourable Minister indicated that;

- The society, communities, families and institutions of socialisation ought to practically, persistently and consistently create conducive environments wherein each South African child can realise a civilizational guide, trend-setter, philosopher, genius, artist, innovator, global entrepreneur and patriot in herself or himself.
- The grown-ups is to strengthen the value systems and material basis upon which South African children will realise a better South Africa, Africa and world.

- The Children's Parliament is not an act of favour on our part. It is the only logical way to resolve the multiplicity of challenges that are before society.
- The Children's Parliament is not a procedural nor a symbolic concern. It is a substantive pursuit that should find expression in each of the country's 52 metropolitan and district municipalities and towns and villages.
- She encouraged State officials who are programme managers of children-focused programmes and interventions is: the social return-on-investment of programmes now need to be self-evident in the lives of the majority of South African children.
- Between now and the next Children's Parliament, the Department must support all Metropolitan, District and Local governments to give full expression to children's issues before these are processed through to the Provincial Children's Parliaments (who will duly convey them to the National Children's Parliament that is hosted by the National Assembly).
- On matters that are relevant to the Children's Manifesto, the Department of Social Development ought to pain-stakingly and substantively attend to all the issues that children outlined in the Manifesto. Likewise, the Department must strengthen the programme of the Office on the Rights of the Child for it to deliver as legislated in the Children's Act.
- The Office on the Rights of the Child should continue to comprehensively support other mandates of government towards the realisation of their commitments in the National Plan of Action for Children that government adopted last October (2020).
- The Department should intensify the rigour of its children-targeted people-public-private-civic-academic-multilateral partnerships pursuant of drawing the necessary attention to matters that are relevant to children's well-being.
- Calling on professionals to generate qualitatively different outcomes and impact with the children-targeted programmes that you are managing.
- Finally, she thanked all the Members of the Children's Parliament for providing leadership on these important matters and acknowledged the lasting partnership

upon which the Children's Parliament was founded: the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

▪ **10. SUMMARY OF CRITICAL ISSUES RAISED BY CHILDREN**

AREA OF CONCERN	PROPOSED RESPONSE BY THE DEPARTMENT	TIME LINE
Private meeting with the Minister of Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ORC together with Ministry to arrange a date for the children to meet with the Minister.</li> <li>• The ORC to arrange logistics for the meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depends on the availability of the Minister.</li> <li>• The children proposed a date before the 5<sup>th</sup> November</li> </ul>
Lack of proper communication e.g. emails by from child ambassadors requesting information from the department are not responded to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The responsible ORC teams at provincial and national level to share their contact details with the child ambassadors.</li> <li>• A dedicated person to be appointed at national level as a point of entry to attend to all issues raised by children and to facilitate responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 October 2021</li> <li>• 30 October 2021</li> </ul>
No mentoring and support and proper guidance for child ambassadors and the initiatives they take in their communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provincial ORCs to play an active role in supporting and addressing issues raised by children.</li> <li>• The national ORC to develop an action plan with clear activities to guide the work of the ambassadors during their period in office.</li> <li>• The action plan to be finalised and implemented with provincial ORCs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous</li> <li>• 30 October 2021</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 2021</li> </ul>
Direct communication with the office of the Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children to address issues with the provincial coordinators, then to the national office if the services at provincial level is not satisfactory.</li> <li>• The national office to ensure that all issues raised by children are addressed timeously.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous</li> </ul>
No feedback on the implementation of the 2019 children's manifesto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national office to compile a progress report on the implementation of the Manifesto.</li> <li>• The report to be approved by the Minister and shared with the children.</li> </ul>	23 October 2021
No feedback on the webinar held on 01 June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national office to compile a progress report on the implementation of the Manifesto.</li> <li>• The report to be approved by the Minister and shared with the children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 October 2021</li> </ul>
Statistics on Violence Against Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national ORC to gather the required statistics and share this together with the feedback report to children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 October 2021</li> </ul>
Non – availability of other Departments during the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national ORC to strengthen coordination and ensure that key departments responsible for the implementation of child based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous</li> </ul>



	<p>activities are involved in the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future children's Parliaments to involve other national departments</li> </ul>	
Ministers responsible for children's programmes e.g. education to be actively engaged and involved in the Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To strengthen partnership with DBE</li> <li>• Draft a submission for the Minister to engage with the Minister of DBE and also request her presence in the private session with children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 October 2021</li> </ul>
The once off annual session is not enough to address children's issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To draft an activity plan to engage with child ambassadors e.g. quarterly or twice a year to engage, report back and reflect on progress made by on the implementation of child rights issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 October 2021</li> </ul>
The national Parliament to be hosted over a period of two days to allow children enough time to raise their issues and to offer a platform for the relevant Ministers to respond and account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To plan the parliament together with the children.</li> <li>• Allow children to take the lead in the process while offering guidance and supervision</li> </ul>	Continuous
A dedicated office / department focusing specifically on children's issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ORC located in DSD has already been established.</li> <li>• This office must capacitated to enhance its visibility and functionality in coordinating child rights issues in the country.</li> </ul>	

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improving the capacity with assist this office to fulfil its mandate effectively.</li></ul> |  |
|--|---|--|

## 11. INAGGURATION OF THE 2021 AMBASSADORS

The 2021 children ambassadors were inaugurated by the MEC for Social development in Gauteng (standing in for the Minister of Social Development, together representatives from UNICEF, Ms. Christine Muhigana, Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Ms. Konehali Gugushe and Save the Children South Africa, Mr. Emmanuel Modikoane.

The children were wished well in their tenure as 2021 child ambassadors and were encouraged to continue to play an active role in advocating for the rights of children.

## 12. SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION

The declaration was signed by all partners including the newly elected president of the Parliament, Hamza Muhammad.

## 13. OBSERVATIONS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ❖ Since its inception, the Children's Parliament was initially planned to take place on 18 July of every year, but because of other logistical challenges, for the past few years, it was hosted in October 2021 during the Social Development Month.
- ❖ The previous Parliaments rotated in all provinces and since 2020, the Parliament was institutionalised into the Programme of the National Parliament.
- ❖ The children's Parliament session was initially planned to take place on....., however due to the local government elections, the Parliament was put on recession.
- ❖ This impacted negatively on the Children's Parliament programmes and the office had to implement alternative measures.

- ❖ Therefore, the Children's Parliament session was planned and implemented with very short time frames.
- ❖ Since this is an annual event, in future the planning process for the next Parliament must start at least six months before the next Parliament.

## CONCLUSION