



Nelson Mandela
CHILDREN'S FUND



CHANGING THE WAY SOCIETY TREATS ITS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

South African Children Manifesto

Advancing Children's Rights in 25 Years of Democracy

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Foreword

Children's rights to education, health-care and service are not picketed over nor considered election issues by communities, because they do not even know what children's rights are.

Provincial governors should be elected rather than being appointed by the President, giving people a direct say on who becomes their provincial leader. Priority should be given to children's issues in education, health and safety. Children need protection, safe drinking water, birth registration and free health check-up. Improve participation of children in school management committees and local government structures. Implement safety policies to ensure healthy learning environment for children.

By Ms Hoikana Madumo

Preamble

We, the Ambassadors, Presidents, Speakers of the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament of 2017 and 2018 and Efeng Bacha Advisory Committee came together on the 22 – 24 February 2019 to develop “**A South African Children's Manifesto**” at **Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg, Gauteng Province**.

We, the children of South Africa call upon political parties, executives, officials in all spheres of government, Chapter 9 institutions, State Owned Enterprises, business, labour, social movements and the broader civil society organisations to adopt, engage, implement and monitor the South African Children's Manifesto. We demand full incorporation of the Section 28 of the South African Constitution, international, regional and domestic instruments in adopting a child centred approach that realises our rights, responsibilities and wellbeing.

According to Section 28 of the Constitution, every child has the right to:

- a) A name and nationality from birth.
- b) Family or parental care, or alternative care when removed from family environment.
- c) Basic nutrition, shelter and basic health care and social services.
- d) Protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation.
- e) Protection from exploitative labour practices.

We therefore demand that the new government ensures that the four pillars of the Constitution which are: **Child Protection; Child Development; Child Survival and Child Participation**, are prioritised to ensure our holistic and inclusive wellbeing.

1. BACKGROUND

In 2011 to 2013, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund and the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities came together to create a platform for children to raise their issues. When the Ministry was dissolved, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, National Department of Social Development and Save the Children South Africa collaborated on the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament (NMCP). Each year, children's representatives from all districts attended the children's parliament. At each sitting, children elect child ambassadors who serve for a year from all the nine provinces. In addition to the ambassadors, the sitting elects a speaker and president who preside over the proceedings. Over the years, children have presented the declaration to government and leaders of civil society on issues that affect us with little response to our concerns and issues. As a result, we the provincial ambassadors, speakers, presidents and EfengBacha advisory committee, have come together to develop the first South African Children's Manifesto.

While our immediate focus is on 2019 National elections, the Children's Manifesto serve as a framework that will ensure that the new government prioritise our rights, responsibilities and well-being in the next five years.

In the twenty-five years of democracy, our births are still not registered, whilst others have no shelter, food, health care or schools. We are abused at home, at school, in churches, in the streets, play areas and public spaces. In this democratic period, we have not felt safe, secure, protected, nurtured and prioritised. This was acknowledged by the President in his 2019 SONA:

“Our programmes must be measured, first and foremost, by the impact they have on our children. Though they constitute a third of our population, though they hold within their hands the future of our nation, the voice of our children is seldom heard. They cannot vote, they do not set policy, and are therefore too easily ignored.”

As children, we want the next government to prioritise us and make us central in their planning, by creating a child centred government that ensures safe, nurturing, protecting environment for children to grow and develop.

2. OUR DEMANDS

This Children's Manifesto aims to address issues that affect us in South Africa under the following priority areas.

- Child Protection Rights
- Child Development Rights
- Child Survival Rights
- Child Participation Rights

2.1. Child Protection Rights

2.1.1 Violence Against Children

As children we are abused physically, emotionally, psychologically, verbally and sexually by family members, educators, priests, peers, strangers and many other adults in the community.

Violence in the home: Children's behaviour is influenced and affected by what is happening in the home. Children are abused physically, emotionally and sexually by relatives and strangers. Parents can cause a lot of trauma to the children. Many parents are under pressure so they end up being harsh on their children. Some parents can't solve their problems and they resort to beating up or shouting at their children. If you are not safe at home, where can you run to? Violence in schools: The school is no longer a place of safe learning. Anything can happen any time. Violence happens between teachers and learners and amongst learners. Sometimes thugs come from outside to rob the children.

Orphans also experience a lot of violence especially in child headed families or foster homes. Some of the parents are not suitable to raise the children. They cause them more harm. Many children are forced to work at a young age.

The Next Government should:

- Allocate resources for healing and building of families
- Train parents/ step-parents/ guardians and foster parents on discipline without being violent towards their children.
- Provide free counselling for abused children and their abusive parents.
- Provide school based counsellors – some children may be afraid to discuss about abuse with their parents or relatives.
- Introduce anti-violence programmes in school's e.g. programmes on violence in dating relationships.
- Ensure that educators who abuse children are dealt with harshly
- Ensure that Child Protection Units are visible every day and not only during Child Protection Week
- Ensure proper screening and monitoring of foster parents
- Create a platform where orphans can report abuse

2.1.2 Bullying

Children are violent towards one another. Many children who are bullied end up dropping out of school. Bullying takes many forms, including cyber and verbal bullying. The issue of cyber bullying is growing in society as the use of technology increases. This affects our self-esteem, in turn contributing to being suicidal and this impacts on our education and wellbeing.

The Next Government should:

- Integrate bullying in the curriculum
- Conduct school based campaigns on bullying

2.1.3 Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment contributes to learner drop out, some learners resort to rebellious acts such as alcohol and drug abuse, including self-harm and suicide. Twenty years after the Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Act, this is still occurring in South African schools.

The Next Government should:

- Introduce parenting programmes that teaches parents to discipline children without violence.
- Train teachers in effective methods that engage the learner without a need for corporal punishment.
- Ensure that the South African Schools Act is enforced in Schools
- Ensure strict measures taken against educators who use it

2.1.4 Gender Based Violence

As children we are abused sexually both girls and boys through parents, step-parents, educators and strangers. This leads to girls having unintended pregnancies, drop out of school, boys resorting to disruptive behaviours.

The Next Government should:

- Introduce gender equality and girl's empowerment as part of the curriculum
- Integrate empowerment and support for the boy child.
- Invest in a campaign to encourage fathers' active role in the lives of their children.
- Introduce awareness campaigns on violence in dating relationships.
- Introduce gender equality policy in schools.

2.1.5 Gangs in schools.

Gang violence in schools and communities is on the increase, schools are being vandalised. We request team between parents, educators, government officials to create a safe learning environment. As a result, of gang violence crisis, we end up feeling unsafe on our way to school. This contributes to going to school at our own risk.

The next government should:

- Involve school management, teachers, parents, and community, in partnership with the police to create a safe learning environment in schools.
- Ensure Police to make unannounced visits in schools and search for dangerous weapons.
- Ensure that each school has more than one sports code and other extra-curricular activities

2.1.6 Harmful traditional practices

2.1.6.1 Ukuthwala (Early Forced Child Marriages)

Ukuthwala (abduction and forced child marriages). This violates many of the rights of girls – survival, protection and development. Ukuthwala leads to trauma.

The Next Government should:

- Strictly enforce laws against Ukuthwala as a criminal offence and capacitate traditional leaders
- Conduct research on traditional practices that protect children. These must be included in government policies.

2.1.6.2 Virginitv inspection

Girls must not be forced to participate. This practice discriminates against those who are not virgins. Those who are virgins can be abducted for human trafficking. Virginitv inspection is unhygienic and leads to potential spread of disease.

The Next Government should:

- Organise national child participation/consultation sessions with traditional leaders and elders on the rights of the girl child in relation to virginitv inspection.

2.1.7 Substance and Abuse

Substance abuse is damaging to children. Alcohol companies must contribute a percentage of their profits to assist children to recover from alcohol. Taverns next to school premises should be closed. Age restriction for purchase of alcohol to be raised to above 21 years.

Substance abuse is harmful to children. It is alarming how easily accessible and that is alarming and age registration

The next government should:

- Enforce the law on taverns that are situated closer to schools.
- Increase age restriction for the purchase of alcohol to above 21 years.
- Enforce the ID system to make sure the age is adhered to.
- Incorporate the danger of alcoholism and drugs in the Life Orientation curriculum.

- Invest resources in rehabilitation of children who are addicted to nyaope and other drugs. And support to parents, addition
- Ensure strict investigation and punishment to those who supply drugs to children.
- Provide counselling and support for children and parents who are addicted to alcohol.
- Provide that sports and recreational activities in all schools

2.2. CHILD DEVELOPMENTAL RIGHTS

2.2.1 Under-Resourced Early Learning Centres

Poor education and lack of infrastructure in early learning centres especially in rural areas. Not enough schools for learners with special needs. Also, many teachers are not qualified to deal with children with disabilities. Lack of resources for visually impaired learners, there is not enough Braille machines in provinces and municipalities.

The next government should:

- Invest in early child learning, build more ECD centres especially in rural areas and new residential areas outside of towns.
- Invest in training teachers to specialise in early learning curriculum which is based on children's lived experience.

2.2.2 Poor quality of education

We receive poor quality of education, which leaves us unprepared for the world when we finish High School. We demand quality education rather than focus on percentage on Matric results. Not enough textbooks, sometimes we are forced to share one text book with up to 10 to 15 learners.

Overcrowding in classes is still a big problem. There is poor infrastructure in schools, especially in rural and township schools. There are no sports and extra mural facilities for some of them. Meals that are served in schools are not healthy.

2.2.3 Lack of sanitary pads and Teenage pregnancy

The majority of girls from poor families lose school days due to lack of access to sanitary pads. This also leads to most of the girls being vulnerable to abuse and dropping out of school. Budget must be made available for provision of

The Next Government should:

- Ensure that the choice of subjects is introduced early so that when a learner gets to Matric, he/she is already familiar with the basics.
- Train and monitor educators in effective teaching methods
- Ensure that education curriculum is aligned to children's talents and interests.
- Ensure that there is enough textbooks per learner
- Ensure that textbooks for visually impaired learners are printed in 18 font size instead of 11 font.
- Provide each government department and libraries with a Braille machines.
- Ensure that educational curriculum will increase entrepreneurship among young people.
- Ensure that school feeding schemes provide nutritional meals and are properly monitored

sanitary pads. Teenage pregnancy is a major problem in South Africa. It increases school dropout rate for girls. It also imposes a social, emotional and health, burden on young mother's and her child which could increase the cycle of poverty in their life.

The Next Government should:

- Provide free sanitary towels in schools and clinics.
- Invest in multiple campaign that will address the increasing rate of teenage pregnancy.
- Intensify reproductive health education in the school curriculum.
- Invest in a specific teenage parenting programme for their development.

2.2.9 Learner Transport

Learner transport is a key to access education. Even though this affects all learners, it is more of a problem for children with disability. The scholar transport vehicles, most of them are not roadworthy, which leads to high accident where we are killed and injured. In some cases, we walk long distances to school crossing railways, rivers, and going up the mountains. This makes us vulnerable to victimisation and violence. Sometimes we are raped, assaulted, harassed. This leads to school drop-out and deaths.

The Next Government should:

- Ensure strict control measures on vehicles that transport children to school that are roadworthy.
- Provide government sponsored learner transport services for all learners.
- Provide learner transport that is accessible for children with disabilities.
- Ensure that all learner transport drivers must be screened and responsible citizens

2.2.10 Violent protest in communities

Protests in communities are disturbing learners and interfering with teaching and learning. Every year there are a number of violent protests that block roads and prevent learners from getting to school and encourage them to protest.

The Next Government should:

- Ensure adequate and affordable accommodation for students
- Prioritise financial aid for students.
- Ensure that payments are done on time.
- Ensure that the police should manage violent protests properly.
- Ensure that no child is blocked from going to school during such protests.

2.3 CHILD SURVIVAL

2.3.1. High infant mortality rate

High infant mortality rate is affecting the lives of many children. In addition, many children die in the early years of their lives because of diseases that can be treated.

Infant mortality rate is high, children are dying because of diseases that can be cured or prevented. As teenage mothers and teenage parents we do not have enough support to raise our children. We lack parenting skills and lack knowledge to raise our children.

The Next Government should:

- Ensure prenatal care accessible to all teenage mothers
- Ensure that there are accessible child- friendly clinics and personnel.
- Provide enough medication in clinics and hospitals.
- Provide health care services at Early Child Learning Centres.

2.3.2 Hunger and Poverty

The majority of us go to bed and school hungry because our parents are not working and they therefore do not have any form of income. Those who receive the Social grant is not enough to meet the basic needs of the families. As a result, most of us experience poverty on a daily basis which leads to criminal activities.

The Next Government should:

- Provide and monitor distribution of the food parcels for the less fortunate families
- Increase the amount of social grants for basic needs
- Support community based food gardens.

2.3.3 HIV/AIDS

As children, we are still affected and infected by HIV and AIDS; we do not have access to Anti-retroviral treatment (ARV) and healthy food. We are still stigmatised and discriminated upon. Basic information on taking care when infected and support for us and our families, especially teenage mothers.

The Next Government should:

- Provide treatment for teenage mothers and their children.
- Address the discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS.
- Ensure implementation of child friendly patient charter
- Train Health Professionals on child friendly services
- Ensure that testing and health facilities do not separate those who are consulting for other illnesses.
- Develop a child friendly version of the new Life skills HIV/AIDS & TB Policy of Department of Education and is made available to all children.

2.3.4 Care and support for children with disabilities

There is a lack of basic services for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities are isolated because of the stigma. Some of the parents hide them and they deprived of developmental opportunities and access to services.

The Next Government should:

- Provide basic health and welfare services for all children with disabilities.
- Organise awareness campaigns to sensitise the society about different kinds of disabilities.
- Promote inclusive schools to deal with isolation and stigma.
- Build special schools for those who cannot be accommodated in mainstream schools.

2.3.6 Lack of water and sanitation facilities in rural areas

As children, we still die in pit latrines; others are raped when we go to relieve ourselves far from school buildings. This is a long standing problem which we have raised for many years. We demand immediate attention to this problem across the country.

We also lack safe clean drinking water in schools especially in rural areas and the communities where we live in.

The Next Government should:

- Build proper toilets for schools especially those in rural areas.
- Ensure safety of the learners, toilets must be built closer or they must be part of the school building.
- Provide rural schools and communities with access to clean and safe water.
- Support rural communities in creating water purification projects.

2.3.7 Electricity Crisis

Electricity crisis affects our survival and development as children. Emissions affect the environment, it increases pollution and it makes many of us sick, especially those who live in

informal settlements situated next to industrial areas. Many of us suffer from lung diseases and our parents cannot us to the doctors all the time.

The Next Government should:

- Explore renewable energies like hydroelectricity and solar energy instead of focusing only on coal.
- Include new alternative technologies as part of the school curriculum.
- Allocate enough resources that are meant to help children and their wellbeing

2.4 CHILD PARTICIPATION RIGHTS

2.4.1 Government communication

Documents produced by government are not child friendly, they are written in a complicated language. When they are launched, children are promised that the documents will be turned into child friendly versions but this never happens.

The Next Government should:

- All documents that are meant to communicate with communities must be child friendly.
- Support NGOs who train children to understand the laws and policies that affect their lives.

2.4.2 National Plan of Action for Children

We are aware that the government produces a National Plan of action for children. Yet, many of us do not know anything about this document.

The Next Government should:

- Produce a version that is child friendly once the document is signed
- Engage children in understanding the contents of the document.
- Ensure child participation in implementation of the plan of action in the next five years. 9 Years later

2.4.3 Leadership building and children's representation in governance

As children we are seldom consulted on programmes that affect us. When we are consulted, our views are not always taken seriously. We have Junior Councils in some Municipalities but they are not part of the main Council. A small percentage of children know and participate in Junior Councils. As such, our issues do not make it in the main agenda of the Council. Budgets at council level are not always used for the needs of children because information of what is available is not shared with children.

The Next Government should:

- Ensure that Junior Councils are established in every Municipality and the structure should be the same as the Senior Council.
- Provide resources for more children to participate in children's parliament.
- Invest in children's leadership building in schools, communities and the society.
- Develop Children's Rights Policy that makes a distinction between children's rights and welfare.
- Approve and make Child participatory framework compulsory at national, provincial and local government level.
- Ensure every school in each Municipality must participate in Junior Council.
- Ensure that children must also form children's ward committees.
- Encourage media involvement in all issues affecting children

2.4.5 Institutional Arrangements and Budgetary Allocations

We know that before 2009 children' rights issues were based in The Presidency. However, since they were removed there is no strong voice for children's well-being, rights and responsibilities.

The Next Government should:

- Ensure a well-co-ordinated and well-resourced Office on the Rights of Child, is established at the three levels of Government; namely; The Presidency, Premier's Offices and Executive Mayor's Offices.
- Create a Portfolio Committee which is responsible for children's rights and well-being.
- Ensure budgetary processes to be child centred.
- Separate children and women in all programmes and policies because children's rights and well-being issues are always overlooked.
- Ensure every school should participate in Junior Council.
- Ensure educational campaigns including media related issues affecting children.
- Ensure Child Participation must also start in the wards.

3 CONCLUSION

We, the children of South Africa, are rights holders as affirmed in the UNCRC, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children and Republic of South African Constitution.

It should therefore, be recognised that we are not recipients of social and welfare services only but also active citizens of the Republic of South Africa.

We, as the foundation of democracy, therefore demand government to make sure that everything done must be in our best interest.

We affirm our responsibilities as guided by Article 31 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

We affirm our contribution as citizens, will continue to make a difference in South Africa, Africa and the world.

We know that we cannot vote yet, therefore we request all voters in the upcoming elections to put children first:

#YourVoteMyFuture.

The development of the South African Children Manifesto was facilitated and coordinated by the following stakeholders:

Nelson Mandela Children's Fund

Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative

South African Human Rights Commission

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National Department of Social Development

Offices of the Rights of the Child in KwaZulu- Natal, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Free State, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, North West and Limpopo

Save the Children South Africa

South African Local Government Association