



SOUTH AFRICAN

Children's

MANIFESTO



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 be appointed by the President thus 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



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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, officials in all spheres of government, Chapter 9 institutions, State Owned Enterprises, business, labour, social movements and broader civil society to adopt, engage, implement and monitor the South African Children's Manifesto.

We demand full incorporation of Section 28 of the South African Constitution as well as international, regional and domestic instruments in adopting a child centred approach that realises our rights, responsibilities and well-being.

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 prioritises the four pillars of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which are: **Child Protection, Child Development, Child Survival and Child Participation.** These four pillars are embodied in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as well as the South African Constitution.



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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 in facilitating the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament (NMCP).

Each year, children's representatives from all districts attend 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 presented their Declarations to government and leaders of civil society on issues that affect them with very little response. As a result, we, the Provincial Ambassadors, Speakers, Presidents and Efeng Bacha 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 prioritises 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 and protective environment for us 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. Parents can cause a lot of harm to their children. Many parents are under pressure so they end up abusing their children physically, emotionally and verbally. Parents who cannot solve their problems resort to beating up or shouting at their children. Some adults abuse children sexually at home. If you are not safe at home, where can you run to?

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

Violence in schools: The school is no longer a safe place of learning. Anything can happen at any time. Violence happens between teachers and learners and amongst learners. Sometimes thugs come from outside the school premises to rob the children.

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 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. 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, a factor which contributes to us being suicidal. Many children who are bullied end up dropping out of school. This has a negative impact on our development and well-being.

The Next Government should:

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



2.1.3 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

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

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.
- Ensure strict measures are taken against educators who use corporal punishment.

2.1.4 GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

As children, both girls and boys, we are abused sexually by parents, step-parents, educators and strangers. Girls end up being pregnant and drop out of school while boys resort to disruptive behaviours.

The Next Government should:

- Introduce gender equality and girls empowerment programme as part of the curriculum.
- Integrate empowerment and support for the boy child.
- Invest in a campaign to encourage fathers to play an 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 vandalised. As a result, we end up feeling unsafe on our way to school. This contributes to us 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 make unannounced visits to schools to 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) violates many of the rights of girls – survival, protection and development. It also leads to psychological trauma.

2.1.6.2 VIRGINITY 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. Virginity inspection can also be unhygienic thus leading to potential spread of disease.

2.1.6.3 INITIATION SCHOOLS

As Africans, we appreciate our culture and we believe that it helps to build our character. However, we are concerned that going to initiation school is like a death sentence to many of us. Every year, many boys do not come back home. Culture is abused for the sake of money. Some of the initiation schools are illegal. Boys who are not circumcised are stigmatised. Discrimination against boys who choose to circumcise in hospital or those who choose not to circumcise is a violation of their right to choose. This affects boys' self-esteem.

2.1.7 SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse is harmful and damaging to children. It is alarming that alcohol and drugs are easily accessible to children. Alcohol companies must contribute a percentage of their profits to assist children to recover from alcohol.

The Next Government should:

- Strictly enforce laws against Ukuthwala as a criminal offence.
- Work with traditional leaders in enforcing this law.
- Conduct research on traditional practices that protect children. These must be included in government policies.

The Next Government should:

- Organise national dialogues with traditional leaders and elders on the rights of the girl child in relation to virginity inspection.



The Next Government should:

- Traditional leaders must work closely with the Department of Health
- Illegal initiation schools must be shut down and the operators must be arrested
- Operating an illegal initiation school must be a criminal offence.

The Next Government should:

- Enforce the law on taverns especially those that are situated closer to schools.
- Increase age restriction for the purchase of alcohol to 21.
- Enforce the ID system to ensure that age restriction is adhered to.
- Incorporate substance abuse in Life Orientation curriculum.
- Invest in rehabilitation of children who are addicted to nyaope and other drugs.
- 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 sports and recreational facilities in schools and communities.

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2.2 CHILD DEVELOPMENTAL RIGHTS

2.2.1 UNDER-RESOURCED EARLY LEARNING CENTRES

There is poor education and lack of infrastructure in early learning centres especially in rural areas. There aren't enough schools for learners with special needs. Many teachers are not qualified to deal with children with disabilities. There is lack of resources for visually impaired learners. This includes lack of 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 only focusing on the percentage of Matric results. We do not have enough textbooks; sometimes we are forced to share one text book with up to 10 to 15 learners.

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 curriculum is aligned with children's talents and interests.
- Ensure that there are enough textbooks per learner.
- Ensure that textbooks for visually impaired learners are printed in 18 instead of 11 font size.
- Provide each government department and libraries with Braille machines.
- Ensure that curriculum increases entrepreneurship among young people.
- Ensure that school feeding schemes provide nutritional meals and are properly monitored.

Overcrowding in classrooms is still a big problem. There is poor infrastructure in schools, especially in rural and township schools. There is also a lack of sports and extra-curricular activities in many schools. 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 makes some of the girls vulnerable to abuse and dropping out of school. Budget must be made available for provision of sanitary pads.

The Next Government should:

- Provide free sanitary towels in schools and clinics.
- Invest in a multiple-pronged campaign that will respond to the increasing rate of teenage pregnancy.
- Intensify reproductive health education in the school curriculum.
- Invest in teenage parenting programmes for girls and boys.

Teenage pregnancy is a major problem in South Africa. It increases girls' school dropout rate. It also imposes a social, emotional and physical burden on a young mother and her child. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

2.2.4 LEARNER TRANSPORT

Learner transport is a key factor that determines access to education. Even though this affects all learners, it is more of a problem for children with disability. Most of the scholar transport vehicles are not roadworthy. This leads to high accident where we are injured and killed. 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 and screening of drivers and vehicles that transport children to school.
- Provide government sponsored learner transport services for all learners.
- Accessible learner transport for children with disabilities.



2.2.5 VIOLENT PROTESTS IN COLLEGES AND COMMUNITIES

Every year, there are a number of violent protests in which members of the community block roads and prevent learners from going to school. In some cases, students cannot continue with learning because of protests in colleges and universities.

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 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

Infant mortality rate is high. Children are also dying in the early years of their lives from diseases that can be cured or prevented. As teenage mothers and teenage parents 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 that prenatal care is 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 school and bed hungry because our parents are not working and they therefore do not have any form of income. Social grant is not enough to meet the basic needs of families that receive the grant. As a result, many of us experience poverty on a daily basis. This can lead to criminal activities.



The Next Government should:

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

2.3.3 HIV/AIDS

As children, we are 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.

There is lack of basic information on care and support for us and our families. This affects teenage mothers more.

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 health facilities do not separate those who are testing for HIV with those who are consulting for other illnesses.
- Develop a child friendly version of the new Life skills, HIV/AIDS & TB Policy of the Department of Education. Make this available to all children.

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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 are therefore 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.

2.3.5 LACK OF WATER AND SANITATION FACILITIES IN RURAL AREAS

As children, we still die in pit latrines; others are raped when they go to relieve themselves 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 we live in.

The Next Government should:

- Build proper toilets for schools especially those in rural areas.
- To 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.

2.3.6 ELECTRICITY CRISIS

Electricity crisis affects our survival and development. Emissions affect the environment, it increases pollution and it makes many of us sick, especially those who live in informal settlements which are situated next to industrial areas. Many of us suffer from lung diseases and our parents cannot afford to take us to doctors.



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 promote their wellbeing



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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.

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.

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 to the main agenda of the Council. Budgets at Council level are not always used for the needs of children. Information on available resources and what is planned for children is not shared with them.

The Next Government should:

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



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.



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.

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2.4.4 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS

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

The Next Government should:

- Ensure that a well-co-ordinated and well-resourced Office on the Rights of Child is established in 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 that budgetary processes are child centred.
- Separate children and women in all programmes and policies because children's rights and well-being issues are always overlooked.
- Ensure that every school participate in Junior Council.
- Ensure educational campaigns including improved media coverage on issues affecting children.
- Ensure that Child Participation 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 the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

The next government should therefore recognise that we are not just recipients of social and welfare services; we are active citizens of the Republic of South Africa.

We therefore demand government to make sure that planning and implementation of policies and programmes must be done 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.

As active citizens and rights holders, we will continue to make a positive contribution in South Africa, Africa and the world.

Because we cannot vote yet, we request all the 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

June 16 Youth Foundation Development

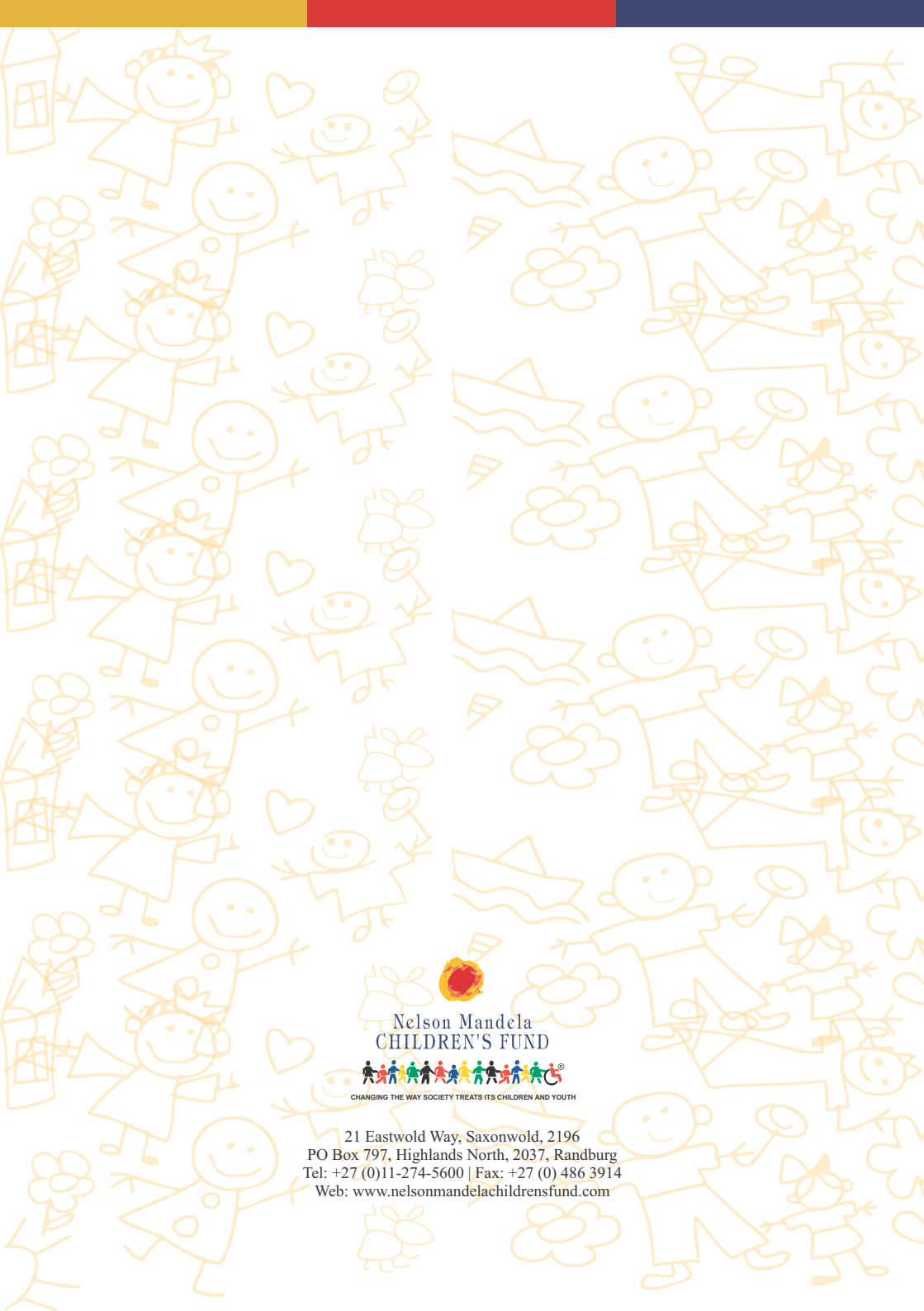
National Department of Social Development

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





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