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STATE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S CHILDREN:

AN AGENDA FOR ACTION.

Launching of the State of the South African Children's Report:

Johannesburg Civic Theatre, 16 June 1993.

Background:

The launching of the State of the South African Children's Report is an important milestone in a series of programme planning and advocacy initiatives by the National Children's Rights Committee (NCRC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), intended to promote the survival, protection and development of 3:11 children in South Africa.

The NCRC is a local non-sectarian, non-partisan, non-profit making, non-governmental umbrella organization comprising over 200 non-racial, democratic service and professional associations, parents and civic groups, as well as other extra-parliamentary organizations working for the promotion of children's rights and welfare. UNICEF is the United Nations' organ whose mandate is to assist parents and communities through governmental and non-governmental channels to safeguard children's rights to survival, protection and development in environments that are supportive of sound and healthy development. UNICEF promotes children's well-being throughout their formative years in both third world and industrialized countries, and accords priority attention to the most needy and vulnerable children.

1.2 UNICEF assistance to South African children and women dates

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back to the mid-1970s, in response to and in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly for organizations of the United Nations to provide assistance to national liberation movements and to the people of South Africa suffering under apartheid policies.

During the 1980s, Governments and the international community increasingly called attention to the worsening conditions of children and women inside South Africa as a result of the escalation of violence, as well as the deterioration of the delivery of basic services for the majority of the Black population. In response, UNICEF arranged briefings and external study tours for several non-racial Non Governmental Organizations from South Africa. This was followed by a conference of a broader spectrum of South African NGOs held in Gaborone, Botswana, early in 1990, with UNICEF assistance.

As a result of these consultations, over 200 NGOs working with and for children formed an umbrella organization, the NCRC, to facilitate the drawing up of a coordinated plan of action for alleviating the plight of South African children and women; to oversee the implementation of such a programme, as well as to be responsible for resource mobilization for the implementation of planned activities. '

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Study on the Situation of Children and Women:

However, before a meaningful plan could be drawn up, it became necessary to carry out an indepth study of the situation of children and women, so as to obtain the required data to facilitate the planning process. This is the first ever national study of the situation of children and women in South Africa. It examines the fundamental and priority needs and concerns of child survival, protection and development, encompassing such issues as their health, welfare, and legal status within the social, political and economic context of the country. The study also identifies priority areas for programmatic action.

Why Launch the Report?

The launching of the State of the South African Children,s Report is a unique occasion to bring together political leaders, policy makers, NGOs, Community leaders and parents as well as bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, whose policies in one way or another affect the well being of children and women. It is a unique occasion during which children themselves will have the opportunity to speak directly to many of the adults and leaders who are involved currently in the restructuring of a new South Africa and appeal to each one of them to put children first in the priority agenda. The launching of the Report is, therefore, intended to:

initiate a consensus seeking process on the priority needs of a__ll children in South Africa.

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3.2 provide basic data as well as recommendations for action to policy makers and major stakeholders involved in the political and sectoral negotiations process; and

3.3 appeal to them to give priority attention for the pressing need to take urgent steps to promote the survival, protection and development of a_ll South Africals children.

4.0 Organization and Logistics for the Launch:

Although the NCRC is an umbrella body with a membership of more than 200 NGOs, the launching of the State of the South African Children,s Report is an occasion for a:ll of South Africals children. It is, therefore, not being organized only for NCRC affiliates but rather for a_ll groups committed to improved well being for a_ll children in a new South Africa.

4.1 Regional Level: 5

At Regional Level, children are already engaged in a number of workshops on the Rights of Children as well as other social mobilization activities as a logical follow-up of the first South African Childrenls Summit, held in Cape Town in May/June 1992. These will culminate in a week of activities leading to the celebration of the International Childrenls Day on June 1st.

Workshops are intended to:

(a) give children a forum for discussing their rights and responsibilities;

(b) it is during these regional workshops that children will nominate regional delegates to represent them at the 16 June Launching of the State of the South African Children,s Report.

4.2 National Level:

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At National Level, a big media event (see programme) will be organized at the World Trade Centre on the afternoon of the 16 June this year, to commemorate the Organization of African Unity (OAU) - United Nations, Day of the African Child. Among the invited guests will be top policy makers at political and sectoral level from the different negotiations fora, national and international N GOs, civic organizations, religious groups, women and childrens organizations professional and cultural associations as well a cross section of the private sector, to come to hear the children speak. ?(See Annex 1 for list of guests) .

Media Activities:

The media is being encouraged to show drive and initiative in publicizing the many activities of the children from each region, especially during the few weeks to the run-up to the launch. In this way, the media will play a key role in helping to create public awareness in readiness for the ibig day. Each NCRC region is also being encouraged to seek out the media and cooperate with them in keeping them informed on all developments.

On the day of the launch, local and international media based in the country will be invited, and an appeal will be made to them to give the occasion the prominence it deserves. At the same time, NCRC/UNICEF will make arrangements for a video coverage for a subsequent documentary on this and other activities relating to the rights and welfare of children.

5.0 Programme Highlights:

This is the draft of a programme for the Launching of the State of the South African Children's Report, drawn up by NCRC DAC National Planning Committee:

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1330HRS XV

Introduction by Child Master of Ceremonies;

A word on the Day of the African Child: OAU;

Opening remarks: NCRC/UNICEF.

Interfaith service

Play by all the children

Song by children from all the regions

Speech on behalf of CRC: Child

Speech on behalf of UNICEF: Child

Poetry and songs.

Launch of "State of South African Children:

An Agenda for Action": A child's Summary of the Report;

Contextualization of the Report: Launch & Conference;

Dance;

Song;

Closing remarks by a child.

Music;

Vote of thanks - NCRC/UNICEF.

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Publications for the Launch

What will be said at the launching will in many ways only highlight the results of many months of research and fact-finding efforts. However, all invited guests will have access to a number of publications which in essence will contain more detailed information for their ease of future reference and possible follow-up action.

State of South Africa's Children: An Agenda for Action:

This will be a glossy, full colour booklet, of synthesis of data from the main study with pictorial and graphic illustrations, is meant for busy policy makers, negotiators and stake holders involved in political negotiation process, NGOs, the sectoral fora and which are concerned with Children's rights, local community and religious leaders as well as international donor agencies and UN Organizations, to enable them to access the information more easily.

Press Kit:

In order to make life easier for the busy editor and journalist, the Press Kit is a package of articles, photographs and graphic illustrations, specially prepared for ready media use. It draws the attention of editors especially, to disseminate this information as widely as they can.

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Women and Children in South Africa - A Situation

Analysis:

This is the full report on the study, containing in detail data on the situation of children and women, areas and recommendations of action as well as recommendations for programmatic action. This is a mine of information, especially for those who would wish to delve into more details of the situation of children and women in South Africa.

Conference on the Situation of the South African Child:

Eskom Conference Centre, 17-18 June 1993.

The launching of the State of the South African Children's

Report will be immediately followed by a Dissemination

Conference on the Situation of the children and Women in

South Africa. The main purpose 'of the Conference is to

disseminate data obtained from the Situation Analysis Study

with a view to initiate a consensus building process on the

priority areas of children and women needs, as well as agreeing

on an agenda for action in a future South Africa.

In this way, religious leaders and believers of different religious

denominations will be re-dedicating themselves to the national

cause for Child Survival, Protection, Development and

Participation.

8.0 A National Programme of Action for all of South Africa,s (a)

Children

The next crucial stage of the programme planning, implementation and advocacy initiatives will be the drawing up of a National programme of Action, (NPA) for a_ll of South Africa's Children.

As part of their commitment to "Keep the Promise" to Africa's children, and as agreed in the Declaration of the World Summit for Children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Resolution on the Implementation of the African Decade for Child Survival, Protection and Development, over 40 African countries have committed themselves to the implementation of their NPAs and, have prepared National Programmes of Action. It is hoped that South Africa too will join the community of Nations in agreeing on the Goals for the Child Survival, Protection and Development for the 1990s for South African children.

A National Programme of Action will largely be directed towards achieving specific and measurable human development goals through inter-sectoral collaborative efforts, using affordable and sustainable community participatory approaches. It is a tool for advocacy, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is also a tool for local and international, public and private resource mobilization. Following are the key steps in drawing up of an NPA:

(b) Use the data obtained from the situation analysis study to initiate a consensus seeking process on priority needs and concerns for children and women.

(0) Formulate goals for Child development for the 19903 in South Africa

((1) Facilitate the drawing up of a National Programme of Action for all South Africa 3 Children.

(e) Reach agreement on appropriate social indicators for monitoring the condition of children and women.

(f) The Implementation of the National Programme of Action will involve the Government, communities and parents. It will draw resources from public and private sectors, from local as well as international sources.

(g) Engage m a process of capacity building and human resources development including the acquisition of skills for continuous assessment, analysis and action, in order to improve programme planning and implementation.

8.1 A National programme of Action for all South Africais Children will therefore, be aimed at meeting the majority of the World Summit for Children goals for Child Survival, Development and Protection within the 1990s, namely:

(a) Between 1990 and the year 200, reduction of infant and under-five child mortality rates by one third or to 50 and 70 per 1,000 live births respectively, whichever is less.

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Between 1990 and the year 2000, reduction of maternal mortality rates by half.

Between 1990 and they year 2000, reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-flve children by half.

Universal access to safe drinking water and t0 sanitary means of excreta disposal.

By the year 2000, universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80% of primary school age children.

Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age-group to be determined in each country) to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy.

Improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. 9

A National Programme of Action for all of South Africa,s Children therefore, puts together various types of suggestive ideas aimed at dramatically improving conditions for children and women, by reducing the infant mortality rates through Universal Child Immunization (UCI), the reduction of maternal mortality rates by improved nutritional status as well as the elimination of Vitamin A and Iodine deficiency disorders by the end of this year by voluntary salt iodization, as well as the complete elimination of polio, measles and neo-natal tetanus by the end of 1994.

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