

SPM/005/0014/10

06.02.91

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**ANC DONORS CONFERENCE 6 - 8 FEBRUARY 1991**

**COMMISSION 4:**

**PAPER ON A NATIONAL INITIATIVE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**BACKGROUND**

For many years the General Assembly has requested the organisations of the United Nations to provide assistance to national liberation movements and the people of South Africa suffering under apartheid regime. In response to this call, UNICEF maintained contact with South African liberation movements in order to facilitate the delivery of programmes for women and children.

In 1989, it was decided that the evolving situation in South Africa presented some NGO's with the opportunity to respond to the needs of children in South Africa, independently of the Government and State Apparatus. The Gaborone Children's Consultative Conference held in April 1990 took a decision to embark on a national campaign focusing on the plight of South African Children, with the aim of alleviating this crisis. The campaign for Children's Rights in South Africa was officially launched on June 1, 1990, ie the International Children's Day, and it coincided with the establishment of the National Committee for Children's Rights.

**VICTIMS AND PROBLEMS INVOLVED**

All individuals and organisations consulted at the time when N.C.C.R was established agreed that apartheid system goes against the basic tenets of human rights and that the children of South Africa have been the worst victims of this system. Presently apartheid is in a crisis manifesting itself through the gross abuse of the rights of the child.

At present no law exist in South Africa to protect children, instead the South African government has, for many years, practised policies which minimise the support given to children and women. Many children are directly affected by the apartheid system, which arrests and imprison thousands of them yearly, in contravention of all international conventions. The number of street children in South African cities has increased markedly. Families have become less and less able to cope with the caring for their children as they wish to, due to poverty, oppression and state sponsored violence. In many parts of South Africa many people including many children and women had been forced to leave their homes because of civil strife and violence encouraged by the apartheid government, particularly in the strife-torn Natal region. These children are displaced refugees in their own country.

The destruction of family life by the apartheid economic system has resulted in levels of infant mortality among Black South Africans which were 10 times higher than among white South Africans. Children in South Africa suffer from hunger, homelessness, malnutrition, physical and emotional abuse, and state sponsored crime particularly in the rural areas and the urban slums. Furthermore, those children who survived had to face an education process in South Africa which attempted to perpetrate the apartheid system through limiting the opportunities for non-racial open intellectual and social growth. There has been many reports of child labour, especially in the rural areas of South Africa. In the urban areas, the incidence of substance abuse among children is increasing due to the high numbers of children who are not attending school.

#### CHARACTER AND MISSION OF THE N.C.C.R

**a) Character:**

N.C.C.R works with individuals, groups, community organisations, development agencies and institutions which deal with the issues of children, at local, regional and national levels. N.C.C.R is non-sectarian and works with all those who share N.C.C.R'S overall objective that is promotion and protection of children's rights with a view to improving their conditions. The N.C.C.R encourages the formation of regional forums in all regions of South Africa. These forums are composed of community and professional organisations as well as individuals concerned with children.

**b) Mission:**

The N.C.C.R stands for the promotion of the livelihood of children and protection of children's rights. It is committed to policies and principles that are for the improvement of the quality of life of all children of South Africa irrespective of colour, race, creed or gender. It is against all forms of child abuse, ill-treatment, malnourishment and degradation that hamper the balanced growth and development of children.

#### OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES OF THE N.C.C.R

The present N.C.C.R programme has the following objectives:

1. To make all the people of South Africa aware and concerned about the situation of children in South Africa and about the rights of children as determined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the aim of entrenching the rights of the child in a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa.

2. To assist in improving the capacity of all those democratic, non-racial and non-governmental organisations in South Africa, concerned with the protection of children and providing social services to children, to broaden and strengthen their work, particularly at the local and regional levels.
3. To develop a more comprehensive information base on children and women in South Africa, with the aim of publicising this information in ways that it can be used by non-racial democratic popular organisations for mobilising communities to network to protect children.

While these objectives are not specifically defined as would be desired, it is understood and accepted that more specific objectives will be developed for each project to be implemented under this programme by the concerned NGO and N.C.C.R. At that stage, more specific measurable targets will be defined. These projects will all be developed in the spirit and within the confines of the objectives and priorities defined above.

#### PRIORITY PROJECTS OF N.C.C.R

##### **1. Nationwide Campaign for the Children's Rights:**

To raise awareness and understanding about the situation of children in South Africa, using booklets, posters, stickers, Tee-Shirts and audio-visual media, cultural performances and a special child rights song for publicity. It will include mass education (formal and informal), workshops (on child rights and training), public events (meetings, teaching, marches) networking with national and international organisations concerned with children.

##### **2. Research:**

A situation analysis will cover the following areas in relation to children and women in particular (but not limited): health, education, welfare, demography, socio-economic, rural and local administration, constitution, land, housing, environment and culture.

The objective of this study is to develop a reliable database on children and women in South Africa without the distortions of the apartheid system, build a compendium of the agencies inside South Africa who are involved with the care and protection of children's rights and make the data about children and women available in any analysed form and in languages which will make the data accessible to all the people of South Africa.

3. **Support to NGOS working for children in South Africa:**

1. To expand the service delivery capacity of non-racial democratic NGOs concerned with children in South Africa in order that they might address the immediate needs for child survival, protection and development (CSPD)
2. To strengthen the management and organisational capacity of non-racial democratic NGOs concerned with children to plan, monitor and report on the activities which they undertake for children.
3. to facilitate the establishment, maintenance and expansion of a network of non-racial democratic NGOs concerned with the situation of children in South Africa.

To train, retrain and upgrade parents, teachers, health and welfare workers with the purpose of expanding the service capacity of their organisations.

BUDGET

Although there are children's organisations in South Africa, there has never been any national coordinating structure for the specific needs of the children. Despite the moves towards negotiations, children's situation has not been impacted upon. This is one of the reasons why N.C.C.R is envisaged to have an effect of setting the pace for the entrenchment of the rights of the child in a future South Africa. To be able to do its work N.C.C.R requires funds, equipment, transport and training facilities. Immediate assistance is required to carry out the following programme:

1. Administration and coordination of the project at all levels, to also include capital equipment:

- National Office rental	R15 000
- Stationery, photocopying, telephone, faxing and postage, petty cash, bank charges, audit and legal fees	R90 000
- Capital equipment, office furniture, typewriters, computers, fax machine and a photocopier	R150 000
- Travel expenses for both national and regional participants including a car for the national office	R90 000
- Salary for a national research coordinator	R60 000
- Salaries for two administrative secretaries/typists, one for the national office and one for research	R60 000
- Salary for 15 regional coordinators	R540 000