

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CHILD RIGHTS COALITION (SANCRC)

An advocacy and communications coalition to support coordinated action for effective child rights governance in South Africa – now, in the face of covid-19 - and in the future.



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INVITATION TO JOIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CHILD RIGHTS COALITION

Introduction

A number of concerned child rights organisations have come together, united in their recognition of the need effective coordination to improve the realisation of children's rights to be protected and develop to their full potential. They have agreed to start the process of building a national child rights coalition. This document provides information about the coalition, the interim steering committee members, and the process. It further serves as an invitation all non-government organisations who share the same goal of a strong, national child rights governance system that can protect and promote children's rights at all times - now in this time of crisis and into the future – and recognise that success depends on collaboration, mutual support and accountability of all role players to the rights enshrined in our Constitution and the development imperatives in our National Development Plan.

An inclusive, broad-based child rights coalition is key to effective child rights governance. It is required by child and human rights treaty bodies and is a precondition for enabling civil society to fulfil its role as a development partner as mandated by the National Development Plan.

Treaty bodies like the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the United Nation's Committee of Experts have called for improved coordination as a foundational building block of rights-based, sustainable and inclusive transformation and development. The need for stronger coordination applies equally to government and non-government organisations.

Effective coordination requires continuity, resources, inclusion and technical capacity. South Africa has a proud history of strong collective civil society action, but resource constraints and other pressures have made it difficult to sustain coordination arrangements beyond issue-based campaigns. This is a critical challenge for effective child rights governance which requires that children's rights and best interests are at the centre of all decisions and are advanced across the governance planning cycle – a cycle that is not time bound and limited to only certain issues and forums. For example, if we look at treaty reporting processes – they are cyclical and intended to drive an ongoing process of improved realisation of rights. This requires permanency in terms of civil society monitoring, engagement, reporting, advocacy to ensure follow-up on concluding observations and participation in decision-making from one reporting period to the next. In addition, it requires constant vigilance, participation and accountability platforms to ensure children's rights are at the forefront of all routine decisions, and where rights are at risk, a clear and coordinated mechanism for ensuring communication, advocacy and resolution of the issues.

A number of the organisations driving this process participated in the National Children's Rights Intersectoral Coordination Committee convened by the Department of Social Development. This forum recognised that South Africa is in urgent need of a standing coordinated platform upon which we must build the national child rights governance system – and that ideally it should be located in the Presidency. Civil society must be active participants in this platform; to do so effectively requires that we organise and coordinate our efforts to ensure a strong and effective voice for children's rights across the governance cycle.

Advocacy efforts started before the COVID 19 lockdown. A number of the organisations in the interim steering committee started discussions to build a coordinated non-government platform. The discussions

continued, albeit under difficult circumstances with a wider group of organisations which have agreed that we need to expedite the process of establishing a coordinated communications and advocacy platform in the light of the COVID 19 crises which has exposed and aggravated the significant risks for children and the challenges the sector faces in addressing these independently.

Interim steering committee

A number of organisations responded to the need for urgency by taking initial steps towards establishing a national child rights advocacy and communications coalition. The organisations have constituted an interim steering committee with the objective of getting the process started. They have contributed their knowledge, resources and energy to establish a platform and processes for civil society organisations to unite and collaborate to strengthen our child protection system. The interim steering committee is currently made up of the organisations listed below. It is an open platform that any member organisation may become an active member of, if they wish to play a stronger steering role in getting the coalition established and active. Once the coalition is up and running, the committee will be formalised through inclusive, democratic and transparent processes which will involve all members.

Steering committee members

The interim steering committee member organisations are:

1. Child Rights Network for South Africa
 - a. Felistus Motimedi
2. Child Welfare South Africa
 - a. Julie Todd
3. Community Chest
 - a. Yumna Martin
4. D G Murray Trust
 - a. Iris Nxumalo-de Smidt
5. Disability sector
 - a. Lidia Pretorius
6. Give a Child a Family
 - a. Monica Woodhouse
7. Graca Michel Trust
 - a. Richard Montsho
8. Kindernothilfe
 - a. Phil Donnell
9. MiET Africa
 - a. Dawn Jones
 - b. Renjini Devaki
10. Molo Songololo
 - a. Patric Solomons
11. NACCW
 - a. Donald Nghonyama
12. Nelson Mandela Children's Fund
 - a. Mampe Ntsedi
 - b. Charity Nash

13. Save the Children South Africa
 - a. Emmanuel Modikwane
 - b. Litlhare Rabela

Please see the attached document introducing the steering committee organisational representatives.

Any organisation is welcome to be part of the steering committee and contribute their resources – human, financial, knowledge, religious, legal, including other networks throughout South Africa – to strengthen the coordination, planning, communications and advocacy of the coalition.

If you are interested in becoming part of the steering committee, please complete the membership form to formalise your membership and send an email to the secretariat using the details provided at the end of this communication.

Coalition goals

The intention is, in the short term, to strengthen and facilitate, coordinated civil society communication and advocacy for the promotion and protection of children’s rights throughout the COVID 19 responses. governance processes. However, the longer-term goal is to build on the foundations we put in place now to strengthen the sustainable national child rights governance system through an inclusive, transparent and accountable national civil society child rights coalition.

Coalition objectives

- To facilitate coordination of civil society for effective realisation of children’s issues
- To facilitate collaboration to amplify civil society’s voice, resources and impact on children’s survival, protection, development and participation
- To provide a platform for collective civil society advocacy and communications for children’s rights in South Africa

Rationale for the coalition

Through our work on the ground and advocacy with local, provincial and national government, the steering committee members have experienced and witnessed a groundswell of commitment, as well as frustrations in the effective realization, promotion and protection of children’s rights. This has become particularly critical as we face the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children and their families, head-on.

We have therefore taken the bold step of starting the ball rolling. We are in the process of establishing a virtual platform and processes to enable and support a coalition of like-minded non-government organisations.

The objective of the coalition is to strengthen the sector’s collective response through broad based, inclusive, coordinated communications and advocacy that builds on existing strengths and opportunities for a strong national child rights system that will reach and protect every child in a time of crisis and beyond.

The opportunities and challenges/gaps the coalition has identified and will focus on include:

1. The many initiatives that are being developed and rolled out to support communities, families and businesses;
2. Limited linkages between these initiatives to strengthen the system;
3. Limited access to information about government and non-government initiatives, the needs of children, how to respond appropriately, effective means of linking families and children with support in this time of limited mobility and beyond;
4. Limited/duplicated resources;
5. Not knowing where we should focus our limited resources to make the biggest difference in children's lives, and then how to do this;
6. Inadequate communications and outreach strategies to ensure that every family and child receives the support they need to protect and promote their well-being;
7. Lack of access to, limited clarity and sometimes inconsistent in programmes, policies, and protocols that affect children in this time of crisis;
The marked invisibility of children and the difficulties in ensuring children's best interests, protection and development in COVID 19 decision-making processes from the highest down to local levels.

We invite any non-government entity that is interested in working collaboratively, to join the coalition and unite in developing, resourcing and implementing a collective, informed national response by civil society to ensure children's best interests are visible and advanced through all decisions and actions.

Functions of the coalition

1. Provide a unifying, communications, advocacy and planning platform for bringing together a broad-based coalition of like-minded non-government/civil society organisations (including community-based organisations, NGOs, research institutes, faith-based organisations, development agencies, organised labour and business entities) that share the same vision for children in South Africa and would like to collaborate in advancing that shared vision.
2. Draw on our collective networks, knowledge, expertise and materials to access and share information and expertise among the network members of relevant programmes, initiatives, policies, processes and protocols that are in place and facilitate linkages between organisations to consolidate responses.
3. Establish a web-based resource hub for the children's sector where all relevant information will be housed and can be freely accessed.
4. Facilitate the sharing of information amongst members, but also between members and government, the media, development partners and business.
5. Provide regular updates on changes, developments and processes that impact on children to the coalition members using social and other media platforms.
6. Facilitate the monitoring of responses, identification of critical challenges, and supporting and holding responsible role players (government and non-government) to account for appropriate redress.

7. Enable and facilitate the identification of critical gaps and challenges in current responses through interactive engagement with coalition members.
8. Establish platforms for collective and inclusive deliberation and advocacy to resolve challenges.
9. Facilitate sectoral participation, representations and submissions in international, regional and national decision-making and accountability processes that ensure the views and voices of children and families are heard and considered, regardless of age, race, gender, ability, geographical location or socio-economic status.
10. To provide a platform for enabling children's agency through their informed participation in coalition decision-making, advocacy and communications initiatives.
11. Generate evidence to build concrete advocacy agenda and influence child rights policy reviews and reforms.

MEMBERSHIP PROCESS, BENEFITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This coalition is not, at this stage, a representative but rather a voluntary participatory, mutually supportive structure.

Any civil society organisation may join if they share a vision of a strong, inclusive child rights governance system grounded in a collective and coordinated broad-based, inclusive, child rights civil society movement.

Membership does come with benefits and responsibilities. The benefits will only be realised if all members fulfil the responsibilities of sharing information freely, capitalizing on networks to access information, sharing your expertise, resources and energy to strengthen all coalition members' capacity to respond effectively to children's issues and the Covid19 crisis – and ultimately to strengthen our advocacy for strengthening the national child rights and protection system through strong, coordinated and effective leadership.

HOW TO JOIN

Any interested organisation can join by completing the membership form that can be accessed by clicking on the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Y673MDG>

Should you encounter challenges with accessing the link, please do complete the attached form and send it to the coalition secretariat at the following e-mail address: infor.SANCRC@savethechildren.org.za

We would prefer all members complete the form electronically through the link provided. If you click on the link, you will access the form on the Survey Monkey platform that will enable us to more efficiently and effectively develop our membership data base.

Please note that the form asks for your organisational information. It also asks what your challenges are, as well as what resources or contributions you can bring to strengthen our collective responses.

Once you have completed the form you will be included on the coalition database and receive regular communications, have electronic access to resources that members are willing to share, raise issues and challenges that you are experiencing and frustrating effective responses to children, and participate in thematic dialogues coordinated through working groups to strengthen responses through shared strategies and activities.

Secretariat and contact details:

The secretariat of the coalition is kindly co-hosted by Save the Children South Africa and Give a Child a Family on behalf of the interim steering committee.

Should you wish to contact the secretariat, please reach out to:

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