



Network News

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR CHILDLINE SA - Issue 10: March 2008

SUMMARY OF FIRST QUARTER 2008 REPORT

Legislation and Policy

■ A considerable amount of time was spent on analyzing and preparing comment on the Children's Act prior to the first draft being submitted to the Department of Social Development. The next step in the process is that they will go to the PP Committee on Social Development and be opened for public comment. This gives Childline a further opportunity to comment and make any further recommendations that we believe are appropriate. The DSD still plans for the Act to be fully implemented this year. The National DSD office is providing minimal training in each province on the Act. The DSD is planning an implementation strategy and a national conference to drive implementation planning in May. The NGO Sector is lobbying for the larger NGO's to have provincial representation at this conference but this has been discouraged by UNICEF. The Children's Bill/Act Working Group has held further workshops this year to prepare for the second Amendment Act and also to plan for the monitoring of implementation.

■ The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act no 30 of 2007: This Act has now been passed and regulations have been drafted for two chapters (HIV/AIDS testing and other services and the Offender Register). Childline SA was requested to comment on these draft regulations before they were finalized for scrutiny by the DOJCD management. They will also go to Parliament and be released for public comment. The National Prosecuting Authority is finalizing their standing instructions for the implementation of the Act as well as the South African Police Services. Standing Instructions, the National Policy Framework and the training programmes provided for in the Act will all have to be submitted to Parliament and then will open to public scrutiny.

■ The Child Justice Bill: Childline submitted a comment on this to the PPC on Justice and Constitutional Development in January and gave evidence in Parliament. The Committee Chair was very open to comment and is seriously considering several of the recommendations made in ours as well as other submissions.

■ The National Child Protection Strategy: is presently being costed. Workshops are being held in all provinces and the National Coordinator has urged all Childlines to attend.

In this edition..

Summary of First Quarter 2008 Report
In the news
Issues to Watch :
Child Pornography
Status of Child Abuse & Neglect
Law & Policy in SA
Comment on the Budget Speech

Please note that the establishment and maintenance of crisis lines for children are one recommendation of the World Study on Violence Against Children and this serves as a motivation for inclusion in the costing of the National Child Protection Strategy.

■ The National Family Policy has now been developed and is in the process of being finalized and costed. The National Coordinator has participated in this project.

Work on the Positive Parenting Project

Save the Children Sweden continued to offer us funding to continue developing materials on Positive Parenting that are regionally relevant. They have included funding for a regional reference group inclusive of a number of SADC Countries. To this end a workshop was held in December 2007 with others planned. This is seen as a primary prevention activity particularly in relation to the prevention of physical and emotional abuse.

Childline SA participated as a consultant in a pilot project on positive parenting in the South Durban Basin and the learnings from this project are being integrated into the National positive parenting project.

The "Promotion of Positive Parenting and End Corporal Punishment Regional SADC group continues to work actively. Childline SA participates actively in this forum and consistently flags the development of parental skills issue. It must be noted that parenting skills are flagged in the Children's Amendment Act in the Chapter on Prevention and Early Intervention Services which are an imperative for government to provide. This could be a funding opportunity for Childlines to further their preventive work. Funding for these programmes will be accessed through the provincial DSD's.



Lesotho - where great strides are being taken to help more children.

Child Labour

The International Labour Organisation gave the national office funding to flag the worst forms of child labour in all national forums in which the National Coordinator participates and to write articles for publication or contract someone to write these articles. A request was also made to track the management of child labour through the crisis lines and Lamese Mukadem has been contracted to do this.

The SAQA Project

Work on this is continuing and the rewriting of the crisis line manual according to the SAQA requirements is almost complete. Although the training of assessors and moderators has been delayed documents required for the registration are nearing completion.

Child Trafficking

■ All Childlines in the SADC region are involved in the development of a child trafficking policy and plan in preparation for 2010. The first regional meeting was held in December 2007 and will be followed up with a meeting in April 2008.

■ A project on trafficking in Children's Body parts has been initiated through TDM Mozambique Office. As this appears to be happening into and out of South Africa, some of the Childline offices have been selected to participate in reference group research on this topic.

■ Childline SA is also a member of the Southern African Network Against Child Trafficking (SANTAC).

The Data Collection Programme

■ The redevelopment of this programme is well on track and it is envisaged that this will be web-based by the end of 2008. This will eradicate

many of the problems that have been experienced by Childlines but it does mean that all counselors should be encouraged to work directly online.

■ The entire cost of the software development, which is worth R210 000, has been donated. Other costs involved are hard ware and hosting which will amount to about R60 000. I am trying to have these costs donated through Microsoft and Trade-Page.

■ The Data Collection programme has now been translated into Portuguese and has been shared (with Telkom's permission) with Cameroon, Malawi, Lesotho, Mozambique, Brazil, and a request has been received from Cambodia.

■ Childline SA has supported the development of both Childline Mozambique and Childline Lesotho this first quarter of the year. Two days were spent in Lesotho with Warren Londt who assists with the installation of our data programme and training counsellors on how to use the programme.

The counsellors were first trained on telephone counselling for children by Childline Free State and were really keen to have the data programme installed in order to begin the service in Lesotho.

Despite the training beginning on a Sunday, all the counsellors attended, full of enthusiasm. Warren and I enjoyed the experience immensely and were so impressed by the wonderful work already being done by the organisation hosting the Childline in Lesotho – Save the Children.

■ Two days were also spent in Mozambique training counsellors at the call centre in Mozambique. Counsellors at this centre were generally very computer literate and so the training went quickly. Once again there was lots of enthusiasm from the counsellors and everyone was very excited with this next step in establishing the Childline service.



Trying out the programme together with role-play calls.



Rise in child sex crimes

Karyn Maughan



Serious concentration during training in Lesotho.

■ Warren Londt continues to give us free consultation on this programme and we are really deeply indebted to him for this.

Fundraising

Several funding proposals have been submitted on behalf of the network to Vodacom Foundation, Telkom Foundation and First Rand Foundation. The latter has given a dedicated donation. A presentation will be given on this during the meeting on Monday. No response has been received from Vodacom. The Telkom Foundation will respond after their evaluation has been discussed by the allocations committee.

I have discussed with Carol Bower two large funding requests which we are pursuing one to the global fund for HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB and one to USAID.

The USAID proposal submitted in January 2008 to USAID as part of the Family Health International proposal and in partnership with NACCW has not yet been reported on by FHI.

Linda Naidoo and I attended a meeting with DG Murray looking at pilot projects and helping them develop a strategy donor policy in March. Childline has been invited to submit further project proposals to them by May. They are interested in an extension of the pilot programme run by Childline KZN in association with NACCW, Child Welfare and DSD KZN, and in the Limpopo Camp Project, and North West Training of pre-school/crèche staff in Child Protection.

The National Office

The work of the National Office continues to expand and at present I am unable to attend to all aspects of work that should be addressed, especially in relation to law and policy analysis and comment and training on national law and policy. I would like in the second half of the year to offer a training workshop on integrating law and policy for children in each province if time permits.

I would like to thank you all for your support as well as Brett Will and John McKay for the time spent with me after the last full board meeting, focusing on planning, implementation and budgeting. Thank you also to Benita whose supportive calls are very much appreciated.

Joan van Niekerk

National Coordinator.

As of September 17 last year,

480 children had been sent to jail for sexual or violent crimes. A further 1 213 children, most of whom were awaiting trial, were in detention.

In the same month, police arrested and charged 11 656 children - 860 of whom were aged between 7 and 13 - for economic, aggressive and sexual crimes.

And a staggering 63 753 children were arrested and charged between April and September last year.

These statistics, released last week by the department of justice and constitutional development, have been greeted with sadness and frustration by justice, police and prison authorities - but not surprise.

Criminal activity was a big problem

"The government is not unaware of this problem," said safety and security spokesperson Trevor Bloem, adding that "it points to a wider malaise of violence the way in which our core norms and values as a society are being eroded".

Bloem said child criminal activity was a big problem that could not be solved by the police alone.

"We as a society need to take stock," he said.

The data, which formed part of the justice department's submissions to the parliamentary portfolio committee on the Child Justice Bill, also revealed that the greatest number of 7 - to 13-year-olds arrested and charged by police in September were from the Western Cape (185), with Gauteng a close second (181).

Gauteng and the Western Cape were also neck and neck in the number of 14 - to 17-year-olds arrested in the provinces, respectively recording 2 400 and 2 345.

The exact nature of the alleged crimes committed in each province was not detailed.

According to the 2007 Child Justice Alliance Project's Court Monitoring Project, which examined 1 193 criminal cases against children: "This level of sexual violence and other violent crimes for which children appeared at court is a disturbing trend and could be related to specific socio-demographic problems in the Western Cape, with gang activities being particularly problematic and the fact that children are increasingly becoming involved in gangs."

Increase in child prisoners

The study found that the main offences for which children were appearing in Pretoria were theft, robbery, common assault, possession of drugs and shoplifting.

Pietermaritzburg's alleged child criminals were mostly accused of assault to commit grievous bodily harm, followed by theft, robbery, housebreaking and theft, and common assault.

According to the latest justice department statistics, more than half of the 842 crimes for which children were sentenced to direct imprisonment, as of September 17, were aggressive or sexual. A total of 316 were defined as "economic".

Ten of the 104 sexual crimes were committed by children under the age of 15.

The statistics also show that the number of child prisoners awaiting trial had increased from 1 174 to 1 279 between April and September last year.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

the insidious abuser



Child pornography refers to the exposure of young people under 18 to pornography or using young people under 18 in the making of pornography. Child pornography has been described as a form of child sexual abuse and is illegal in most countries, including South Africa. While the mere viewing or use of child pornography has been characterized as a victimless crime, the production of it often involves abuse or exploitation of children who are forced to perform sexual acts.

HOW CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED AND WHY?

Sometimes adults and older children with a sexual interest in children, intentionally expose children to adult and/or child pornography in order to stimulate the child's sexual interest in sexual activity. Sometimes these people appear totally safe and may also develop relationships with a parent in order to obtain access to a child.

Sometimes children are contacted by adults with a sexual interest in children through cell phones, chat rooms and other points of contact through the internet.

Children and their caretakers may believe that the intention of the adult concerned is quite innocent, whereas the exposure or contact may be the beginning of a "grooming" process and the child may be increasingly drawn into a relationship that becomes exploitive and abusive. Remember that people who exploit children sexually usually seem very ordinary and "normal". Sexual offenders do not have a particular personality type.

EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY ON CHILDREN

Pornography, depicting adults or children, is harmful for children to watch or be involved in because:

- It stimulates a sexual interest that may not be appropriate for the age and stage and level of development of the child. Since young children fantasize and imitate, seeing something on screen that they cannot 'filter' or understand, can lead them to play out what they have seen without understanding that it is wrong.
- It may influence and shape their sexual orientation and activity especially as they may lack other sexual experience and therefore have no other reference point for healthy and responsible sexual behaviour.

- Psychological trauma can result when a child is exposed to pornography (more so when they are made to participate). The child becomes reserved, aggressive and confused about their place in the world.
- It promotes promiscuity and a skewed view of what is acceptable sexual behaviour.
- It gives the message that instant self-gratification is more important than establishing a relationship. For example, young boys, instead of enjoying the heart and mind of the opposite sex may merely focus on her body, mentally undressing her and picturing sexual encounters. If they are repeatedly viewing pornography, they can become sexually aggressive to women later and feel uncomfortable in normal, healthy relationships. There is also a decrease in respect for women, in the valuation of faithfulness and a major increase in the importance of sex without attachment.
- It increases child-on-child abuse. This effect is confirmed by many welfare organisations that have seen a link between young sexual offenders and their exposure to pornography.
- Repeated exposure to soft or hard-core porn in childhood can lead to full scale porn and sex addiction in later life. Our own hands-on experience with porn addicts (as well as research) has shown that the common denominator in most cases had been their initial exposure to porn in childhood.
- It is a known strong predictor of sexual deviance in adulthood. Adult child abusers frequently relate their behaviour to inappropriate exposure to pornographic material at an early age.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION & POLICY

- The Films & Publications Act
- The Amendment to the Films & Publications Act
- The Children's Act No 38 of 2005
- The Children's Act Amendment Bill
- Sexual Exploitation and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

DIGITAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

BEFORE THE SEVENTIES, child pornography took the form of still photographs, films and printed materials. Producing child pornography in those years was not a safe occupation because it often involved people other than the actual perpetrator. Films had to be sent for processing, for instance. And distribution also presented a problem, since it often involved the use of postal services. The trade in child pornography then was smaller and riskier.

Then came personal video cams and digital photography, which reduced the visibility of production and the risk of illegal material coming to the attention of photo or film developers. And then the personal computers and the Internet, which allowed child pornography to be created, copied, stored and distributed quickly and unobtrusively to anyone anywhere in the world. The technology of the Information Age has dramatically enhanced ease of production, distribution and increased the amount of child abuse images available to anyone anywhere.

Online child pornography takes two basic and different forms. The first is the more overt, website, Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and newsgroup facilities and the second is the covert, sophisticated activity that takes place in relative privacy with the aid of encryption software and secret passwords. (The Wonderland Club)

Internet chat rooms are provided by Internet Service Providers and are accessible to anyone with internet connection, via a PC or mobile phone (Mxit), and the requisite software, which is readily and freely available. These IRC facilities allows for group discussions as well as the exchange of files containing images, still and moving, between participants. And chat rooms are among the favourite hunting grounds for paedophiles and child molesters.

The World Wide Web (WWW) contains hundreds of thousands of websites devoted to pornography and child sex and may be accessed quickly and anonymously. The

provision of secure credit-card processing services, which disguise the nature of the transactions, makes detection of subscriptions to such websites even more difficult.

More discreet and private exchange of child abuse images are facilitated by private bulletin boards. Technologies of pseudonymity and anonymity enable people to create false identities so as to avoid identification. Technologies of encryption allows one to conceal the content of Internet communications, including images, by converting the communication to unintelligible form using a mathematical algorithm or "key" so that only someone with that "key" can decrypt the content into intelligible form.

Remember the difference between analogue and digital and remember to explain it to a presiding officer in terms that a five-year-old will understand! When you use a photocopying machine, you are making copies from an analogue picture to produce more analogue copies of that picture. When you are downloading, you are creating a picture from information stored in the binary code of batches of zeroes and ones. There is no picture coming over the Internet in to your hard drive only batches of zeroes and ones. You have to create the picture by using your keyboard and computer software only "pointing and clicking" or using a keyboard command will enable you to see the image. That is why downloading should be charged with two offences creation and possession. (See the opinion of the Michigan Court of Appeal and Jayson decision of the UK Criminal Court of Appeal).

This article was written by Iyavar Chetty (2005). Iyavar Chetty is a Senior Executive Officer and legal expert of the South African Film and Publications Board. Mr Chetty also represented South Africa in the Council of Europe's Committee of experts which drafted the Budapest Cybercrime Convention and the First Protocol on Racism and Xenophobia on the internet.

SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS VIZ INTERNET & CELL PHONES

When parents decide to have a computer in their own with internet access, they cannot ignore the risks this poses to their children (if these children are old enough to use the internet). As such parents should teach their children about some of the risks involved rather than assuming their children will know these and how to handle themselves.

General guidelines to follow

- Talk to your child about responsible use of the internet and cell phones (e.g. to use for school projects and/or keeping in touch with parents during the day).
- Encourage your child to share with you their internet or cell phone interest.
- Place the computer in a room which is shared by all members of the family.
- Obtain some form of internet filter which blocks access to information and sites which you think are harmful to your child.
- Establish clear rules about the use of the internet and cell phone if the child has one.

- Discuss the consequences of visiting "off limits" sites with your child and make sure that you impose these consequences if the child does visit "off limits" sites.
- Develop your own internet skills.
- Monitor the sites your child visits regularly.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- www.sikkerchat.dk (Chat Safety) run by Save the Children Denmark
- Thinkuknow www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- Websafecrackerz www.websafecrackerz.com
- SafeKids www.safekids.com
- Netsmartz www.netsmartz.org
- MXit www.mxit.co.za
- Cybersmarkkids www.cybersmarkkids.com.au
- NetAlert www.netalert.net.au
- WiseKids www.wisekids.org.uk

A summary of

THE STATUS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY AND CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Joan van Niekerk, Childline South Africa

Introduction

The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 has resulted in numerous law and policy reform initiatives, especially in the field of child protection. The change of government and the inclusion of all communities and cultures in elections and government resulted in the flagging of the needs of vast numbers of children, who up until the present African National Congress took power, were marginalised to the point of near invisibility.

Law and Policy Reform:

1. International Conventions and Protocols: With the change in government, South Africa signed and ratified numerous Conventions and Protocols during the decade after the change of government. These included (among others):

- the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Having signed these Conventions, the SA government then embarked on a process of domestic law reform in order to bring domestic legislation in line with these international commitments, as well as to try and ensure an equal dispensation to all the country's children.

2. The National Constitution: The Constitution of South Africa is regarded as one of the most progressive in the world and has in it a specific clause protecting the rights of children. This clause was inserted as a result of active lobbying on the part of the Child Rights NGO's inclusive of SASPCAN (ISPCAN's national partner in SA) and Childline SA.

3. The White Paper on Welfare was developed as the guiding policy for all welfare provisions in South Africa and highlighted in particular the status of children and the need to adopt a preventive and developmental approach to the well-being of children.

4. The Children's Act: This legislation deals with giving effect to the rights of children as well as to addressing provision for the basic developmental and protection needs of children. The Act, passed in two sections, has a strong focus on the protection and development of the family as first line of protection and development of children. Although drafted the regulations still have to go through both a parliamentary and public comment process and it is envisaged that the legislation will only be fully implemented in October 2008.

5. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act was passed in 2007. The Act codifies criminal sexual acts against children and has strong provisions against child prostitution. However the protections for the child witness as s/he progresses through the Criminal Justice System are weak and many role players believe that the procedural provisions for the management of Sexual Offences do little to contribute to the safety and protection of the child witness.

Both the Children's Act and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act contain provisions for registers of offenders who commit offences against children.

6. The Child Justice Bill is presently being debated in Parliament. This legislation seeks to provide care, rehabilitation and protection for children who are in conflict with the law. The Bill is regarded as progressive and has a strong restorative justice focus, in that it will divert many children who acknowledge criminal behaviour away from the

Criminal Justice System into rehabilitation and restorative justice programmes.

7. The National Strategy for Child Protection: This policy document has also gone through a lengthy process of development with work beginning in 1996. The strategy has gone through numerous re-drafts, and delays have been influenced by political factors, as well as a lack of capacity in the responsible government department. However the policy, which provides for child protection principles, protocols and systems, is presently being costed both at national and provincial government level.

8. Grants and feeding programmes: South Africa has, through its social security legislation, established a social security system for children who live in poverty. The amount is very small and certainly does not cover the needs of children, however it does contribute to food security for the poorest of the poor children. The grant does not extend throughout the entire childhood of the child and once a child reaches the age of 14 years (to be increased in 2009 to 15 years) the child support grant falls away.

School feeding programmes have also been instituted in schools in areas characterised by poverty. However once again the school feeding programmes are being implemented at primary school level, which excludes older children, and concerns have been expressed about the high levels of corruption that characterise these schemes.

Implementation challenges and issues

These include:

1. Political will is problematic.
2. Resources i.e. 'the brain drain' of human resources in the health and social service professions to other countries comprises service delivery of passed legislation.
3. Funding remains an ongoing challenge because of a lack of resources in the National Treasury as well as a lack of expertise and experience in the costing of services, the development of budgets and appropriate spending of such budgets.
5. Tensions between the NGO sector and government are variable.
6. International funding has tailed off or comes with complex strings attached. A further challenge has been the diversion of funding relating to children into HIV/AIDS related issues to the exclusion of child protection.

It is of note that the UN Convention on Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights of the Child have been used as guiding international policies for the development and transformation of law and policy relating to children in South Africa. Our commitment to these international treaties has been used as a compelling force to analyse the development process and the content of the law against these documents.

The World Health Organisation Guidelines on Child Maltreatment have not been extensively used in the development of law and policy, probably because the law and policy reform processes in South Africa began before the finalisation of these guidelines. The South African Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, the National Partner of ISPCAN, has been a strong participant in the development of these provisions, especially in the National Strategy for Child Protection.

However the greatest challenge lies ahead. Good law and policy is only as effective as its implementation. Planning for implementation and improved partnerships between the NGO and Government Sectors has been initiated.

For the full version of this paper, please visit the Childline South Africa website www.childlinesa.org.za

COMMENT ON THE BUDGET SPEECH A BUDGET FOR CHILDREN?

Joan van Niekerk,
National Coordinator, Childline SA

THE DUST HAS long since settled on Minister Trevor Manuel's Budget Speech delivered in Parliament in February 2008. Many analyses of the budget have been offered in the media print, electronic and visual. However few have really considered the impact of the budget on children particularly children living in situations of disadvantage and poverty.

At first glance the budget looks positive relief for tax-payers, increases in social grants, increased expenditure on education and crime prevention and management. However looking at the detail of the budget should give rise for great concern when it comes to provisions for children.

Much is said in the budget about the need to enhance our educational systems in order to provide South Africa with a skilled workforce, and indeed more money a substantial increase has been allocated to the Department of Education in order to achieve this end. The Minister quoted (p6) from our constitution in support of this decision stating that

"our Constitution compels us to.....improve on the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person...." However we need to consider the quality of life that the budget extends to many of the country's children and what children need in order to benefit from the opportunities offered through an improved educational system and furthermore how these issues relate to other budget decisions.

The Child Support grant has been increased by a meagre 5 % from April 2008 from R200 to R210.00 per month and a further R10 in October 2008, bringing the grant to R220 per month from October 2008, and also announced the extension of the grant to include children UP TO their 15th birthday in January 2009.

One has to challenge these decisions

- The grant increases are not keeping pace with the rate of inflation and therefore by October 2008 the grant will provide less than it was able to provide in October 2007. I think it is trite to say that maintaining a child on R220 per month would present most parents with an impossible challenge.
- The grant amount is not compatible with even just the food consumption of the majority of children, especially young growing teenagers
- The continued exclusion of older children is a cause of great concern.

The Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, has several times decried the high drop-out rate of children from school from Grade 9 onwards. Why is she surprised? This is the grade at which children usually reach the age of 14 years there is therefore no continued support to keep poor children in school. Similarly most feeding programmes provided in schools and which contribute meaningfully to the supplementation of the child support grant are provided at

primary school level. Thus when a child living in poverty reaches high school level, the support that would assist in keeping this child in school, fall away.

Do Ministers Manuel and Pandor discuss how fiscal and budget policy and problems with children remaining within the education system have connection?

Furthermore one often hears that the Child Support Grant encourages teenage girls to fall pregnant in order to access the grant. Although this is not supported by research, perhaps the few girls who are tempted to fall pregnant in order to access the grant would be less tempted to do so, if they could access the grant in their own right in order to enable them to eat and attend school?

Whilst 26% of the country's children have stunted growth due to inadequate nutrition, and 68% of our children live in poverty, Minister Manuel has given tax-payers (who have to earn above a certain threshold before they pay tax) tax relief! Surely tax payers who have income in the middle range income brackets should have foregone tax relief enabling this money to be diverted into child support grants for children 15 years and above an extension of the Child Support Grant to ALL children.

Minister Manuel acknowledged in his budget the rising inflation and that the "course ahead will be somewhat tougher" but how much tougher will it be for those who live in poverty? Childline's experiences confirm that children who live in poverty are so much more vulnerable to involvement in crime and more likely to experience exploitation of all kinds.

"I come from a culture in which, traditionally, children are seen as both our present and our future, so I have always believed it is our responsibility as adults to give children futures worth having.

I have often been shocked and angered to see how shamefully we have failed in this responsibility.

Children are precious gifts, which adults everywhere have a duty to protect. Political leaders make promises about the protection of children, but the important thing is that they should fulfil those promises."

Graca Michel

For a country in which politicians continuously repeat the rhetoric that "children are our future" and "we must as a country raise our growth potential", we are certainly NOT investing in this future if we do not invest in our children's present.

We need to consider budget policy in the light of a quotation from Graca Machel whose commitment to children's issues, along with that of her husband Nelson Mandela, is legendary.

"I come from a culture in which, traditionally, children are seen as both our present and our future, so I have always believed it is our responsibility as adults to give children futures worth having.

I have often been shocked and angered to see how shamefully we have failed in this responsibility.

Children are precious gifts, which adults everywhere have a duty to protect. Political leaders make promises about the protection of children, but the important thing is that they should fulfil those promises."