



# Network News

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR CHILDLINE SA - Issue 9: Jan/Feb 2008

## Comment from National Coordinator

Greetings to all who read this newsletter and best wishes for the year ahead. We are already a month into the new year and time seems to be flying. The year closed with the passing of the Children's Act Amendment Bill and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Bill. The latter piece of legislation has been widely publicised and sadly dubbed "the Kissing Act" because of the poor drafting of the provisions that speak to the age of consent for sexual activity. The Act is a mixture of both positive and negative – sadly many of the provisions relating to the care and protection of the child witness remained omitted from the Act, it is couched in difficult and complex language (of concern to many prosecutors) and the provisions relating to access to treatment services to victims of all ages remain inadequate with a focus only on the provision of Anti-Retroviral Prophylactics as a victim right. The regulations for the Act have not yet been released for public comment and it will be interesting to look at how these will contribute to the implementation of the Act itself.

The regulations to the Children's Act have been drafted and will be released for public comment at some point within the next 2 months. Our next newsletter will contain details on how to access these and the process for comment. A second Children's Act Amendment Bill is likely to be introduced into Parliament in this coming year in order to "tidy up" some of the outstanding issues in the first two Acts – the Principle Act – the Children's Act no 38 of 2005 and the Amendment Act.

The Child Justice Bill is back in Parliament. The date for written public submissions was 30 January 2008 and the public hearings will be held on 5th February. Childline's work includes calls relating to and in some instances rehabilitation programmes for children in conflict with the law, and our prevention and education programmes also have impact as crime prevention interventions. We are therefore delighted to see this draft legislation being taken forward. However once again the Bill is couched in complex language that may challenge appropriate interpretation, and certain children are excluded from diversion. The proposed age of criminal capacity remains well below that recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. However the proposals contain many positives and the Bill does have a strong preventive element to it.

The National Office has a number of projects this coming year that will hopefully contribute to strengthening service delivery to children at the provincial level:

- SAQA registration of our Counsellor Training Manual – and hopefully the funding will extend to the Prevention and Education Manual.

## In this edition..

Comments from National Office  
Focus on Childline Western Cape  
Donations Received  
Outline of Meetings attended  
In the news

- A project with the International Labour Organisation on mainstreaming child labour issues, particularly those forms of child labour which have been identified as "the worst forms of child labour". These include child trafficking, child prostitution, children used by adults to commit crime and children who are exploited through excessive water carrying.

- A pilot project that will develop opportunities to communicate more easily with children and adults with concerns about children through SMS.

- The development of parenting manuals and tools in order to equip our counsellors better when they interact with parents through the crisis line, therapy centres, prevention and education programmes, etc.

- Involvement in Child Trafficking Prevention work with other Childlines in the Southern African Developing Country Region. This is at present focussed on 2010 although the strategies and activities will have effect beyond this date.

- The further development of the data programme which helps us document the nature and content of calls to our crisis line. At present calls are well in excess of 100 000 per month – well beyond the anticipated numbers our data programme was designed to manage.

- The development of a Childline office in Northern Cape

So – a busy year ahead.

Please visit our new website - [www.childlinesa.org.za](http://www.childlinesa.org.za) or [www.childlinesouthafrica.org.za](http://www.childlinesouthafrica.org.za) and please give us feedback – what else would you like to see on the website? What sections do you find most useful? Your feedback will enable us to ensure that the website has value for a broad spectrum of users. A big THANK YOU to Brendon Hatcher of BrilliantWeb and Isabelle de Grandpre who have worked diligently on the re-development of the site.

The newsletter this month focuses on the activities of Western Cape Childline. Each newsletter a different Childline office is featured.

# Provincial Offices Highlight WESTERN CAPE

2007 was a very challenging year for LifeLine/Childline Western Cape, particularly the Childline division. However, the team have worked hard together and the year ended on a very positive note.

## ACTIVITIES

### Prevention and Awareness Programmes

We were fortunate to have a Community Development Worker post subsidized by The Department of Social Development. This post is funded in the Mitchell's Plain area. An area that we have in the past year opened an office and also one that is grossly under-resourced in the area of child protection. The main thrust of the CDW is to present our awareness and prevention programme. She has been welcomed with open arms by the schools, pre-schools and community-based programmes that work with children.

The rest of the Childline team have also been actively involved in presenting our awareness and prevention programmes and we have therefore seen a marked increase in the amount of children reached for this year. We have increased the targeted amount for the new financial year.

These programmes are well-received and there have been a few disclosures through the programmes. As a team, we are also looking at restructuring the programme, to accommodate disclosures in a more sensitive and containing way. These often happen after a presentation.

We have also been fortunate to establish a partnership with the Emergency Medical Response Unit in the WC and have done a number of training sessions with their call centre operators in dealing with children. This has been an interesting experience for them, as we have worked on them understanding the workings of a child and looking at it from a perspective other than that of the child being (labelled as) 'naughty'. There has been very positive feedback about this training and it will continue in the new year.



A child tries to forget her worries in the playroom at the Wynberg Childline Office.

### Counseling

The demand for counseling services continues to grow. The need far outweighs the ability for us to provide the service due to staff capacity. We are therefore also evaluating this service, to see how we could reach more children, without compromising the quality of service that LifeLine/Childline WC is known for. There have been a number of high media-profile cases of child sexual abuse and trauma in the WC in the past year and LifeLine/Childline WC is involved in offering support to the child survivor and the family in some of those cases. We have seen that when there is a lot of media around the issue of child sexual abuse that the demand for our service suddenly spikes. As a result of this, we have tried to use our media contact to also have an educational and empowering element in articles relating to this issue.

A few of our staff have furthered their studies in the field of specifically working with children through Play therapy. We are very fortunate to have Dr. Mariette van Der Merwe, a specialist in the field of child sexual abuse and trauma, as our clinical supervisor. She has been with us for the past eight years and understands not only the field that we work in well, but the organization that we work for. It has been very important in the past year to foster and build on existing relationships that we have with the FCS units, as well as referring agencies. This has assisted in providing the child with as much protection (both emotionally and physically) as possible. It is also clear that we are unable to work in a vacuum with the clients we serve.

### Childline crisisline

We have four full time Childline telephone counselors who work on a four-hour shift basis. They continue to field a high number of calls. We also have a pool of volunteer telephone counselors and we have worked closely with them this year in not only counseling the child caller, but connecting with them at their level. It has been very interesting to note, that it has been both eye-opening and in some cases life-changing for our volunteer counselors to understand the workings of children when looking at it from a developmental and life-experience point of view.

We are still working under staff capacity with counselors on the crisisline, but in spite of this, they have been doing sterling work. We have restructured their clinical supervision that they receive and hope that this will further improve the quality of the counseling service on the crisisline.

### General

This year has been one filled with a number of media interviews, both on television and via radio. This has allowed us to build up good quality relationships with certain media companies. We have also been invited to present a workshop to journalists from our biggest print newspapers on engaging with children when doing a news-story and also understanding and respecting their rights. This workshop also included understanding the impact of trauma on children and how they could be further traumatized if interviewed and engaged with in an incorrect manner. I was also a guest on the teen talkshow, *Keeping it Real*. This was specifically around children's rights, focusing on abuse. An exciting but nerve-racking experience. There were a number of

radio interviews throughout the year on topics relating specifically to child sexual abuse, specifically in the Western Cape. We always aim to add an education and awareness raising element in our media interaction.

We ended the year with our annual children's day, held on 1 November 2007. The target school was Harvester Primary in Mitchell's Plain, where we had a fun-filled day with the Grades 1 - 3 group. We used the opportunity to not only present our awareness and prevention workshop, but also to include various networking partners, such as SAPS, the Emergency Ambulance Services, as well as the fire-brigade. A fun-filled day was had by all and it ended with the 200 children having a drumming session with an organization called the drum café. The children had a wonderful day and fun was had by all.

All in all 2007 has had both highs and lows, with many changes taking place. We have also had a high number of staff that have resigned, but as the year draws to an end and most of our posts are filled, there is a sense of satisfaction at the work that was completed in this year. There is also a strong sense of teamwork among the Childline team which has carried us through.

I'd like to thank our Executive Director, Heloise Solomon, our Board and National Co-ordinator, Joan van Niekerk for all their support and guidance throughout this year. Thank you also to our funders whether big or small for your contribution to helping us make our work a reality and reaching the children of our country.

Wishing you a wonderful New Year.

*Ricki Fransman*

### **VSK PLEDGE SUPPORT**

In July 2007, Childline SA, the VSK (Vereniging Tegen Seksuele Kindermishandeling – Association against child sexual abuse) represented by Janny van Heerbeek, presented Childline SA with EU\$800 and a certificate of support on behalf of the organisation, in order to make a contribution to Childline's treatment programmes for sexually abused children.

This association has a membership of warm and caring people who themselves have survived childhood sexual abuse. Their caring of children in South Africa is warmly appreciated. I enjoyed meeting Janny and her husband - who care deeply about the issue and shared a special concern about sexually abused children in South Africa. Thank you to all the members of VSK.

### **SUPPORT FROM BOKOMO**

A function was held at the Childline Wynberg Offices to celebrate the donation of R1 000 000 from Bokomo. This donation will enable continued service delivery in the provinces.





## MEETINGS/CONFERENCES attended by National Coordinator

### Regional Counter Child Trafficking Workshop

4th and 5th December 2007, Gauteng, South Africa

Attended by over twenty representatives from South African and international organisations working in the child protection field, this workshop sought to:

- Enhance the participants' understanding of child trafficking;
- Map current activities in the southern African region; and
- Develop a counter child trafficking regional referral system.

Amongst discussions held were those around why children contact help lines; the role help lines play in combating trafficking; and the challenges help lines face in dealing with problems reported.

#### CONCLUSIONS

■ Considering the nature of the problem of trafficking, there were many conclusions drawn as how best to proceed to curb this violation of children's rights. A few of these conclusions are listed below:

- Cooperation and coordination is needed between a range of actors at state, non-state and local levels;
- Coordination is needed between actors from different countries, given the transnational nature of trafficking;
- Interventions need to be timely in the immediate, short and longer term; and

Interventions should be designed to anticipate issues and not simply respond to issues.

### Workshop addressing the problem of unattended children at casinos,

29 January 2008, Durban, South Africa

It is becoming apparent that there are many children being neglected whilst their caregivers are in casinos and whilst many casinos do try and address these issues, a more focused effort needs to be made.

As a result this workshop, which was initiated by the Gambling Board of KZN, was attended by representatives from KZN-based casinos, namely Century, Suncoast, Sibaya and Golden Horse casinos, as well as representatives from the Child Protection Committee, Durban Children's Society and Childline South Africa.

During the workshop each casino was given the opportunity to outline the problems they face with regard to children being neglected as well as how they handle these situations.

After group discussions with all participants about the issues that need to be dealt with and suggestions on dealing with these, an outline was given by the Gambling Board of what needs to be done. Following are some of the suggestions:

- There should be a code of conduct in casinos in relation to children who are found to be neglected.
- There should be some kind of standard of care and protocol iro duration, age, and capacity of children in casino creches.

- Child monitors should be introduced - someone who is visible within a casino who a child can approach; and
- There should be a clearly defined review process for those who are banned from the casino including an appeal process and incentivisation for counseling (to be decided who governs this process).

### Workshop on the Children's Act & the Reporting on the Children's Act

Media Monitoring Project, Wits University, 25th January 2008

Hosted by the Media Monitoring Project, this workshop focused on the Children's Act and how this important piece of legislation has often been inaccurately reported on by the media. This is because many journalists have not gone through the act before reporting, have failed to interview children and to properly explain the act to audiences.

The workshop was opportunity for the Act to be properly outlined to editors and journalists present who were then able to question experts on this legislation and the problems children still face. Furthermore, the Media Monitoring Project was able to distribute a summary they have developed of the Act. This summary will not only be of use to the media when reporting on issues outlined in the Act, but it will also be of use to social workers and other child care professionals.

This summary is available with the permission of the Media Monitoring Group on the Childline South Africa website. Go to [www.childlinesa.org.za](http://www.childlinesa.org.za)



#### Child trafficking on South Africa's doorstep

Maputo - Police have detained the two drivers of a truck found loaded with 40 children in a suspected trafficking incident, state media reported on Tuesday (29th January 2008).

The children, all boys aged between five and 13, were found tired and hungry in the back of the truck, which was stopped by police in the central Manica province. They had traveled about 600km from the north of the country and were believed to be headed to Maputo in the south.

State radio and television reported that police believed the truck's final destination was South Africa and that they feared the children were to be trafficked. Police detained the drivers and are questioning the validity of their travel documents.

"The documents of the truck are also doubtful," governor of the central Manica province Mauricio Vieira, told state television. "The driver and his companion are in police custody and will reveal the destiny of the children."

Children's and human rights organisations have raised concerns in the past about child trafficking between the two countries. - Sapa-AP (from iol.co.za)