

Pledge by South Africa

Ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 16 June 1995

Ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 24 September 2009

Acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography on 30 June 2003



Pledges

1. To ensure that within the next decade, every 10-year-old will be able to read for meaning, the entire nation will need to be mobilised behind a massive reading campaign. ECD has been moved from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education. Early reading is the basic foundation that determines a child's educational progress, through school, through higher education and into the workplace. It is through initiatives like the National Reading Coalition that South Africa will be able to coordinate this national effort. All foundation and intermediate phase teachers are to be trained to teach reading in English and the African languages, and a cohort of experienced coaches are being trained and deployed to provide high quality on-site support to teachers. South Africa will be implementing the Early Grade Reading Programme, which consists of an integrated package of lesson plans, additional reading materials and professional support to Foundation Phase teachers.
2. The coordination of disability initiatives has been moved to the centre of government, i.e. issues related to persons with disability now form part of a new Ministry in The Presidency and the Presidential Working Group on Disability has been revived. One of the goals of the South African government is to increase the number of schools that effectively implement the inclusive education policy and that have access to centres offering specialist services. Furthermore, South Africa was one of the first countries to sign the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Protocol will be submitted to Parliament this year for ratification.
3. As part of the broader efforts to strengthen the basic education system by empowering school leadership teams, the capabilities of teachers will be improved and a more consistent measurement of progress for grades three, six and nine will be ensured. This is why subjects like coding and data analytics are being introduced at a primary school level.
4. To continue to strengthen children's participation, this year the country will host its 9th Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament from 26-27 September 2019 under the theme "Celebrating 30 Years of the UNCRC by Holding Authorities Accountable to Children".
5. During the week leading up to the parliamentary procedures, children will be engaged on the alignment of the first South African Children's Manifesto, 2019 – 2023 National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) and the South African Child Participation Framework to the CRC.

6. Representatives from the Children's Parliament will subsequently be taken to the National Legislature in Cape Town in November 2019 in order to address relevant Portfolio Committees on their Outcomes from the Children's Parliament in September.

In light of the commitments we have made under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as applicable, we have undertaken the following to highlight our commitment to the promotion, protection and realization of the rights of the child in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention:

- **What?**

South Africa remains committed to the realisation of the Constitutional Rights of children and meeting the child rights treaty obligations as ratified. The country has reported on progress in this regard and also received concluding observations and recommendations from both the UN and AU Committees. While significant progress has been made on all rights indicators i.e. survival, growth, development, protection and participation, there are key areas that the country seeks to focus on during the next five years. These are aligned to the seven priorities highlighted in the Presidential State of the Nation Address (May 2019). Emphasis has particularly been placed on **Education**, including Early Childhood Development (ECD), and the need to provide skills and create economic opportunities for persons with disabilities.

- **Why?**

In order for South Africa to successfully address the challenge of inequality and poverty across society, it is a matter of great concern that:

- a) children are not receiving the necessary support and education during their early stages of development, thus requiring improved access to quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) below Grade 1;
- b) there are around half a million children of school-going age with disabilities who are not in school; and
- c) South Africa needs to prepare our young people for the jobs of the future, thus requiring a strategy to ensure that children have different streams of education to improve their readiness to access jobs and or tertiary education.

- **How?**

In responding to the abovementioned three challenges, the Government of South Africa has undertaken the following measures:

- a) To ensure that within the next decade, every 10-year-old will be able to read for meaning, the entire nation will need to be mobilised behind a massive reading campaign. ECD has been moved from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education. Early reading is the basic foundation that determines a child's educational progress, through school, through higher education and into the workplace. It is through initiatives like the National Reading Coalition that South Africa will be able to coordinate this national effort. All foundation and intermediate phase teachers are to be trained to teach reading in English and the African languages, and a cohort of experienced coaches are being trained and deployed to provide high quality on-site support to teachers. South Africa will be implementing the Early Grade Reading Programme, which consists of

an integrated package of lesson plans, additional reading materials and professional support to Foundation Phase teachers.

- b) The coordination of disability initiatives has been moved to the centre of government, i.e. issues related to persons with disability now form part of a new Ministry in The Presidency and the Presidential Working Group on Disability has been revived. One of the goals of the South African government is to increase the number of schools that effectively implement the inclusive education policy and that have access to centres offering specialist services. Furthermore, South Africa was one of the first countries to sign the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Protocol will be submitted to Parliament this year for ratification.
- c) As part of the broader efforts to strengthen the basic education system by empowering school leadership teams, the capabilities of teachers will be improved and a more consistent measurement of progress for grades three, six and nine will be ensured. This is why subjects like coding and data analytics are being introduced at a primary school level.

- **When?**

South Africa has reviewed its National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC). The new NPAC coincides with the South Africa's 6th administration and will include government's child rights targets. These are targets set by government departments and will be monitored within government's regularised reporting mechanisms. Although the government has set these priorities for the next five years of the current administration, progress on implementation will be measured through the regularised reporting framework of government, i.e. quarterly and annual reports of government departments as well as Country Reports due to the African Union Committee on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child in 2021 and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022. In addition, the children of South Africa have developed their own Manifesto that includes a range of specific actions they will monitor over the next five years.

- **Who?**

The abovementioned programmes will be monitored by the Ministry in the Presidency for Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation; the Ministry in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities; the Department of Basic Education; the Department of Higher Education; and the Department of Social Development. Numerous international and national CSOs work in conjunction with government in addressing these priorities, including the Child Rights Commissioner at the South African Human Rights Commission and UN Agencies based in the country.

We have made the following plans to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention:

To continue to strengthen children's participation, this year the country will host its 9th Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament in September. The Office on the Rights of the Child in the Department of Social Development, in conjunction with CSOs such as the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Save the Children South Africa, the Graça Machel Trust, UNICEF and the South African Human Rights Commission will host the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament in one of South Africa's provinces, namely Kwa Zulu Natal, from **26-27 September 2019** under the theme ***"Celebrating 30 Years of the UNCRC by Holding Authorities Accountable to Children"***. During the week leading up to the parliamentary procedures on Friday, 27 September, children will be engaged on the alignment of the first South African Children's Manifesto, 2019

– 2023 National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) and the South African Child Participation Framework to the CRC. The children will also engage with the history, successes and challenges related to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child. Representatives from the Children’s Parliament will subsequently be taken to the National Legislature in Cape Town in **November 2019** in order to address relevant Portfolio Committees on their Outcomes from the Children’s Parliament in September. This will provide an opportunity for children’s participation in raising awareness at the national level for the rights of the child to be prioritized and implemented.