

Submission to the F&F Commission Hearings on the Funding of Child Welfare Services

Joan van Niekerk

Childline SA



What Childline Does

- The Crisis Counselling Toll Free Telephone Helpline which receives in excess of 1 500 000 calls per annum from children and adults with concerns about children;
- The online counselling service which counsels children via confidential chat rooms;
- Prevention and child protection information in schools, communities and via the media, most frequently via print and radio.
- Therapy services for abused children and their families;
- Emergency safe house care;
- Court preparation and support for children who have to testify in criminal court;
- Rehabilitation programmes for children who commit sexual crimes or whose behaviour is sexually inappropriate.



What Childline Does

- Training of child protection workers and child carers
- Research on child protection issues
- Analysis of law, policy and implementation challenges
- Participation in law reform processes
- Advocacy relating to the rights of children.

Overall – we provide services to almost 2 million children per annum.





Present Challenges

- Closure and reduction of services in the NPO Sector, including Childline services;
- Lack of alignment of funding to need – with both transfers from DSD and Lottery funding;
- The inequality of service provision across the provinces – if you are a child in need of protection services, best you live in Gauteng or Western Cape – and not Limpopo, North West, rural KZN and Eastern Cape. Should welfare services be an “own affair”? Or at least enable more prescriptive national standards for funding;
- lack of response to referrals from Childline Crisis line from service providers;
- There is focus on quantity not quality of services;
- Lack of inter-sector, and intra-sector coordination – both horizontally and vertically.

Challenges

- The dysfunctionality of the DSD NPO Directorate and the implications of this for NPO's providing Child Welfare Services; (give example)
- Salary disparities across DSD and the NPO sector – which feed into service continuity of services to children;
- Ethical issues in child welfare services – eg DSD insisting that staff they have poached from the NPO sector move immediately without serving the contractual period of notice. The children we are working with are often vulnerable – in order to work effectively we have to build relationships with them, their families and communities. A lack of appropriate termination processes break trust between them and service providers – this impacts on the effectiveness of the service.



Challenges

- The lack of accurate information on services, needs etc. for example we are obliged to report child abuse and intentional neglect to the National Child Protection Register Part A. it is clear from the numbers of children on the register given to us by the national department bears no reflection to the numbers we submit at provincial level. We have requested a direct reporting portal for years – it would save us money and staff time. This would also result in more accurate information.
- Information reported at national meetings by provincial representatives sometimes bears little relationship to what our provincial offices are experiencing in the province.



Overall comments

- The definition of child welfare services should not be – inclusive of social grants
- Agree with alignment to the National Development Plan
- Statistics – are problematic – eg most children in the Eastern Cape
- Lack of stats generally – it is clear that the NPO stats are not used/integrated by the DSD to whom we send this information.
- Other legislation feeds into Child Welfare Services – this should be listed and considered for holistic service provision.



Exclusion of HIV and AIDS, Family and VE programmes from the review

- Childline disagrees
- At present work with children and families is silo'ed
- Need coordination and
- Prevent duplication
- Prevent gaps



Childline Supports

- Standardisation of indicators and monitoring tools – but must be standardised across DSD and NPO's providing the same services. Indicators must look at quality as well as quantity of services.
- Standardisation of indicators and monitoring and tools is just one aspect – one need standardisation of services and funding for services across the DSD and NPO services.
- This would enable NPO's to close the salary gap between themselves and the DSD, contributing to a more stable workforce in child welfare.



Childline supports

- Review of Norms and standards – they are a barrier – not just to NPO's but to children's access to services
- Audit of NPO's – should target NPO's offering child protection services – but along with that could we request a functional DSD NPO directorate – all the information required is sent to this Directorate via audited financial statements and narrative reports.
- However we urgently need an audit of DSD services – there is an unequal application of norms and standards across the NPO sector and DSD Child Welfare services.
- There should be mutual accountability processes put in place.

Childline supports

- The prioritization of public expenditure on welfare services to children – this should not wait until the other recommendations are implemented.
- **But** also to look at how funds are used/not used. Many examples of seemingly inappropriate allocations (– eg job creation, capital expenditure and not services (KZN DSD 2012)) and duplication can be provided
- Poor service delivery must also be targetted – Eg lack of response to referrals from Childline to service providers – this does not just relate to funding challenges.



If we believe that children are our future

- Why are we not investing in that future?

To end with a quotation from Graca Machel whose commitment to children's rights, 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.

dumisile@childlinesa.org.za

admin@childlinesa.org.za

joanvn@childlinesa.org.za

THANK YOU