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Child and Youth Care

A Journal for Those Who Work with Children and Youth at Risk and Their Families



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Childrens Bill “Dikwankwetla
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Networking

The article 'Creating your own Future' in this issue of *Child and Youth Care* raises the importance of networking and networks. Anton Musgrave, coming from a world somewhat different from child and youth care, says that "[n]etworks will replace structures. Your place in life will be determined by your networks – not by your place in the structure". This seems a striking thought! Reading this made a lot of sense to me. Increasingly, we see effective work being done with children youth and their families, as a direct result of networks. Increasingly, options and resources necessary for bringing about change in young people's lives are a step or two (or three) removed from the worker. It is only through knowing someone, who knows someone, who knows someone, that we find someone who can help.

A network is defined in the dictionary as "a system of units, as e.g. buildings agencies, groups of persons, constituting a widely spread organization and having a common purpose". Networks then are intangible structures, webs containing a wide spread of information or opportunities. The old saying 'its not what you know but who you know' does not strictly apply it seems. Networks are about both information and people. Working effectively with networks requires us to know where to find what we need, and how to work with other people and agencies so that they will make what we need available to us. The skill lies in seeing opportunities, and in developing and maintaining relationships with others that are mutually beneficial. For it seems that networks depend on reciprocity – giving and receiving. Whether it is in accessing food parcels, or obtaining specialized services to heal injured spirits, we as child and youth care workers use our networks. Indeed we do this in such a defined and purposeful way that I have often heard colleagues using a (grammatically incorrect) verb form of the word, saying that they are busy 'networking'.

I confess to having had a somewhat skeptical feeling about this phenomenon. It seemed to smack of something 'new agey' (not that that is inherently negative); something at once contrived and expedient. Recently however, I have come to really appreciate the importance of networks, and the extent to which they do carry essential information. People who work with children and youth in isolation from others, without connections into the resources and the thinking of others, seem to struggle either to develop their services, or seem to work in a manner at odds with acceptable practice and policy. Those who lack networks seem frustrated by their inability to provide for their children, and generate a great deal of negative energy in protesting that things should be otherwise. Efficient 'networkers' on the other hand get right in there and make things happen through clever work – by knowing the limitations of the system, and working with these, or finding a way through – with the help of others.

Child and youth care workers need networks operating on a number of levels. We need to create networks at ground level, to ensure effective service delivery to 'this child'. We need inter-agency networks, and we need networks that link us into the broader profession, and the wider world of services to children and families. Perhaps we ought to be more appreciative of our networks, to realize their value, to put effort into maintaining them, and to be open to developing them further – for the benefit of young people. Perhaps we ought to consider 'networking' as a core competency in child and youth care; to realize that successful workers make things happen, often apparently miraculously through connections with others. Perhaps we ought to realize that as child and youth care workers our place in life is *especially* determined by our networks, and that our place in the structure does not have to limit us.

Merle Allsopp

The National Association of Child Care Workers is an independent, non-profit organisation in South Africa which provides the professional training and infrastructure to promote healthy child and youth development and to improve standards of care and treatment for troubled children and youth at risk in family, community and residential group care settings.

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Whether you are a regular or a first time reader of the journal, PLEASE drop us a line or a note and tell us:

- **what was of use to you**
- **what you would like to see covered in future**

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Reflections on the Journal Entries of a Residential Hunter

By Dr. Thom Garfat, keynote speaker for the upcoming NACCW 15th Biennial Conference.

His History or Mine?

Spring 1960. Fourteen years old and my mother's telling me I have to make a choice: either I'm going to learn to obey the rules or she's going to mail the letter she's clutching in her sweaty palm. The one to the Boys' Reform School which asks them to admit me because I'm beyond her control. She says that she can't manage me anymore and is afraid for my future; so she's asking them to take me.

How I respond to her is irrelevant. What is important is the threat; or at least what I, adolescent, arrogant and defensive, perceived to be a threat.

Placement is often used as a threat to moderate the behaviour of children and by the time they come into care a mythology has been created which revolves around that threat "Once more and you're gone," a frustrated parent screams as Lenny wanders in four hours after curfew. "I can't take you any more" is the theme. Is it any wonder that children come to us prepared to do battle, that they consider us the enemy, the ones to be overcome? Some of them have been battling adults for years and care workers have been set up to be the biggest of their battles. How do we respond to the fantasies that they have created?

Do we, like so many other adults in their life, respond with authoritative controlling messages which reinforce their fantasies? Or, do we behave in a caring fashion that contradicts their expectations, thereby creating a confusion that we can take advantage of, as we move to help them understand that the future, their future, rests in the balance?

Do we take the opportunity to be with them in a way that the other adults in their lives have not been able? Or, do we assume that they are a problem and, acting on that assumption, reinforce everything that the worst nightmare a paranoid adolescent ego can dream up?

Children placed into care deserve the opportunity to have their conjured nightmares challenged. They deserve, regardless of their behaviour, to be validated and respected. To do anything less is to recreate the history that they have experienced. And the recreation of their experience of their history is the very thing we wish to avoid. To do less, is to fail. And so we must attend to the threat and to their experience of it. For, if we do not attend to the threat, we miss the apex of their relationship with their expectations of the moment.

I know. I'm a little over the edge here. I have somehow moved from the experience of my own life into an existential juxtaposition with the experience of youth in residential care. But is there another option? I think not.

Unless, of course, I believe it is possible to separate me from them, self from other. I cannot deny that how I play out my life as a residential worker is connected with my own history and how I experience reality. Does this sound too esoteric? Shall I make it concrete? Imagine this scenario, which happens to be true.

Kenny was referred to residential treatment because of his insistence on doing things his own way. He went to school (or didn't) as he felt. He hung around with unsavoury characters from one of the local gangs. He told his mother to fuck off, didn't obey any of her rules and came in when he liked. But he was only 15 and society was too threatened by his behaviour to let it continue. So he was placed in residential care for a few years and then, at the age of majority, he moved on to a successful career.

No! No! He didn't grow up to be a child and youth care worker, in spite of the odds. He grew up to be president (*Get that?—president*) of the local motorcycle gang, controlling the drug traffic in town. He rose to the top of his culture. I know many of us would rather say "subculture" as a way of discounting his success, but he was after all, *the president*, and in control of the world he inhabited. Is

that success or failure?

And the standard I use to judge his behaviour, his success or failure, does that come from his history or mine?

Changing Sides

July 1971. I've got a summer job washing floors. After overcoming the benefits of my childhood and early marriage, I have decided that university is the best escape, so I registered in the English honours program (from which I was quickly expelled) and I now support myself by working as a temporary janitor in the local municipal buildings.

Betty runs the welfare office. She's working late, barely visible behind a mountain of forms needing to be filled out in triplicate. I walk in, mop in hand, to empty the waste paper basket. We say hello and talk for a few minutes about the need for alternative supports for creative people in a terrorist welfare state.

I ask her how one gets to work with people. She gives me the name of the guy who runs a local shelter for troubled kids. I make an appointment and go for an interview. I get hired immediately. Why? Because:

- *I was somewhat delinquent myself.*
- *I've bummed around the world.*
- *I seem to like kids.*

Twenty years later, now that it's me who is responsible for hiring, I wonder if there is a better criterion. A part of me thinks not. Caring for kids and sharing a common history: Is there anything more important? Not as long as you are able to separate yourself from them; to separate your needs from theirs; to know when your actions are for your benefit more than theirs; to know where you end and they begin.

Okay, maybe there is a better criterion. One of the characteristics of an effective child and youth care worker is the ability to be in touch with themselves and make sure that it is not their own business they are working on when they intervene with kids. "Really!" one of the first kids I worked with said, "Deal with your own stuff someplace else." These kids have enough problems without having to deal with ours. If you have unresolved business from your own history, as I and so many of my friends do, hire your own therapist. Don't play it out with youth-in-care.

If this is confusing for you, raise it with your supervisor. If she, or he, doesn't know what you are talking about, find a new job. You are entitled to more support than that.

So, I got a job working with troubled kids.

Moving On And Staying In Touch

June 1972. I've been working in the shelter for a year now. Today, I see three seductive 17-year-olds walking up the driveway proud of their beauty and sexuality. I watch them for a minute and then turn to Andy who has been working with kids for a lot more years than me.

"Hey, Andy. Do you ever feel turned on by some of these girls?" I ask with more than a modicum of fear. Andy is honest; that's one reason why I feel the courage to ask him the question.

"Of course," he answers with his usual aplomb. "The issue isn't what you feel, but how you behave on those feelings." I loved Andy from that moment on and more importantly, I could acknowledge that I have personal feelings when I am with kids. Feelings which say more about me than them.

Unfortunately, from what I can see, the average residential worker believes that what s/he is experiencing is only about the youth. What is it that people think? That they can leave their "self" at the front door? I know I can't.

The "denial of self" is one of the most neglected issues in the field today. There are still workers wandering around out there who believe that they are not there; that their every action is about the kids, not about them and their own business; that they left their "selves" at home.

You cannot deal with these kids, and the issues they raise, without being there. When you feel angered that a young girl has been abused and the very integrity of her being threatened; that is more about you than about her. When you feel that Kenny is a failure because he lives in a "subculture"; that is more about you than about him. Child and youth care, and your practice of it, is about you as much as it is about the kids with whom you work.

Children in care deserve, minimally, for us to be honest, to recognize our own business when it rears its ugly head. If you can't "own your self" when it appears, how can you possibly help these kids? I know I'm probably alienating a few of you now but this is an important point, so let me offer you the following.

If you plant a pumpkin seed and cultivate it as well as you can, but it doesn't produce a pumpkin that meets your



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expectations and you find yourself angry, does that speak to the pumpkin seed or to yourself? Surely you don't hold the pumpkin seed responsible. Surely you must wonder if there wasn't something you could have done differently.

I remember something an early teacher told me, "No matter how far you run, you're always there."

Care, Context And Conceptualization

April 1978. Today I get the chance to teach child and youth care in an academic setting. And, I must confess, I do question whether there is a relationship between the academic reality and the reality lived by kids. I look at these students and wonder how long it will take for the average youth-in-care to destroy them—or vice versa. I mean, really, what does the "differentiation of self in the context of a dysfunctional triangle" have to do with the violence I see when Maria refuses to clean her room? Or when Billy beats on his mother?

Lots, I have now come to realize. For, it is only in understanding the dynamic context of Maria's reality that I can enter it in a way that allows me to be helpful. The tendency in the field to reject theory and academic learning, positions us in ignorance. If we cannot understand, how can we help? If we cannot conceptualize, how can we do other than react to our own internal responses to the demands of the moment?

There is no substitute for learning, both experiential and academic. If we reject learning we deny the reality of children, place self in superiority to other and model that knowledge and understanding are irrelevant. I would rather have children think that staff are always learning and searching for new ways, than to have children think that staff believe that they have all the answers. Ongoing learning is an essential facet of quality child and youth care.

Yesterday Karen phoned. Because she didn't know what to do with a particular child. It's not that I had the answer (I didn't) but how important it was that she could reach out and seek alternatives other than those which she was able to construct herself. Because she can reach out, I imagine that the children with whom she works are better served than those who work with a child and youth care worker who is unable to say that he needs help. Bless you, Karen. I bet the children know that you are struggling. And it probably helps them know that you care.

What You See Depends On Where You Sit

April 1981. The snow has buried my car and I'm an hour late for my first day as director at the residential centre. I wonder if the staff will understand. I know that the kids will. After all, they've been caught in the storms for years. After I arrive, I look out the window of my office and view the campus. At three o'clock, the children run from the school to their units. I think about how wonderful it is that

they like their units so much that they rush home after school. I'm pleased to be here. Two days later I discover that the first youngster back to the unit gets to start the destruction of the cottage. I'm learning an important lesson about the residential world. In many ways it's just like the one outside the boundaries of the centre.

Things aren't always the way you see them but that's a well-known adage in child and youth care. What you see depends on where you are positioned. If you think that what you are seeing is some kind of consensual reality you should have continued in art classes.



Realignments In The Passing Lane

June 1981. The kids rioted again tonight and I realize that I've been living on a different planet than them. At three o'clock in the morning, Inez, who is sixteen, and I argue in the middle of the freeway about the quality of the unit program and the relevance of our work with her and the other kids. Trucks whiz by us as we yell at each other in the passing lane. I decided to enter the reality she occupies. After all, mine wasn't doing her any good. She convinces me that things have to change (or was it just my fear of death?) and we return to the cottage. By six am. we have negotiated a compromise. In the early hours of the morning I realize that she knows more about what is needed than I do. She has taught me an important lesson while we dodged the Mack trucks. The reality of the child is more important than any reality I can construct to explain why she is the way she is. None of the staff agrees with what she has to say. Their world - and their construction of how the world should

be – is very different than the world as constructed and perceived by the children. I face an important dilemma – how to construct a consensual reality that can have meaning for both the youth and the staff. I realize that it's impossible, so I go with the kids. You can only reach consensus if someone compromises.

Thirty-two staff left that year (but more of the kids stayed). Fewer kids tried to kill themselves. We were on the right track. I was learning how to be a child and youth care worker (I had even dropped the capitals). Doing was more important than being. Living was more important



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than dying. The well-being of the children became more important than the vanities of being a member of the staff.

When I look back on that evening and the risks we both took as we fought for what we believed in, I recognize that many of my most important teachers were children. I am tempted to offer up a spiritual metaphor but I don't want to lose the few of you who are still reading this. Hang on. There is a reason for it all.

There Ain't No Up Without A Down

May 1984. So, now I have a more influential position. I swear that the needs of children will be more important than the political realities of the bureaucracy that I work in. I know that I will struggle to maintain my sanity. I realize that I live in a strange world. I think children are the most important reason for my pay cheque. I am not surrounded by an army of supporters. But they are out there: occupying child care roles. Or filling the beds in programs, I realize that my alignments will cause me problems.

Consensual reality can dictate how you see the world. If you let it. And one of the most important lessons for an administrator to learn is that the power of homeostasis can be overcome; but it's not an easy task. When you bring the values of child and youth care into an administrative position you run the risk of being seen as a traitor. You become an "administrator" for the status quo. And the bigger the bureaucracy, the greater the pressure. That's the reason why so many great child and youth care workers make lousy supervisors.

Learning From Care

Fall 1992. Fewster calls and asks me to prepare something for this issue of the Journal and I'm torn. "Can I really say what's on my mind?" I ask. He said yes, so I decide to do it. I read my personal journal to see if there is anything relevant there to stimulate my thinking.

So, now, 20 years later, what do I think is important? I realize that other people may not care what I think; that my "learnings" may be relevant only for me – but let me share them with you anyway. If you think what follows is hopelessly metaphoric you are probably right. Here are five things I have learned in 20 years:

- Reality is defined by the abstract constructions of those who live it. And I can only help facilitate change for others if I am able, and willing, to let go of my own desperate grasp on how I have constructed the world, and see it through the eyes of someone else's madness.
- Children have a better idea than we do about what works. And we usually don't listen to them because of the price we would have to pay if we accepted their perception of what's real and what's important.
- Staff who believe that they can leave their own business at home should go to work elsewhere. Because in the world of pots and pans, what you believe in, and who you are, is less important than how you appear to be.
- If you don't know how to say "hello," you may as well give up now. Because without a good beginning, everything that follows is only a doomed attempt to make up for the beginning that never happened. And that's the story of most of our children's lives.
- If your supervisor can't help you to understand why it is better to risk your life arguing in the middle of the freeway, than calling the police, you should look for a new job (or at least a new supervisor).

Even after 20 years I can't pretend to know what is the best thing to do. In retrospect I wish that I knew then what I know now, but perhaps my present knowledge is based on the fact that I no longer work directly with children. However, after 20 years of working in residential care, more than anything else, I have learned this:

Any time I believe I know what's going on, kids are in trouble. Big trouble. ▲

Report back on the Children's Bill Parliamentary Hearings

Paula Proudlock, Children's Institute UCT.

By all accounts, the parliamentary hearings on the Children's Bill held in August were a great success. The submissions clearly showed that the Bill needs a lot more work to ensure that it can adequately address children's needs.

The hearings also showed the members of parliament (MPs), and the executive drafting team (Children's Bill Inter-departmental Steering Committee) that there are many challenges facing children, and the children's sector that need urgent attention, either through the Children's Bill process or other reform processes. It was clear from the responses of the decision makers that they were shocked to hear of the extent of the challenges.

What happened at the hearings

Submissions that really brought the messages of non-delivery home included the submissions from two groups of children, the Dikwankwetla and Molo Songololo children and youth groups. These submissions and the children's responses to the MP's questions made a noticeable impact on the MPs and the Executive Steering Committee. The MPs deliberately asked the children questions aimed at testing whether the many laws that Parliament spends time and money on debating and passing, were filtering down to the children. The answers clearly demonstrated that there is a big gap between the laws and actual implementation.

Submissions such as Qhamani Educare, a case study of an Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre, and its struggle to access government funding, showed the challenges faced by a medium sized ECD centre in the

Western Cape province. For any MPs who may have thought that these problems were isolated, the South African Congress for Early Childhood Development (SACECD) and Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU)'s joint submission clearly showed that the problems experienced by Qhamani Educare were spread across the country.

The submissions outlining the bigger policy picture such as the South African Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (SASPCAN), Childline, Children's Institute and HIV sector submissions clearly showed that there was an urgent need for a national policy framework, and better co-ordination of service delivery for children.

The Human Rights Watch and Aids Law Project's joint submission on consent for medical treatment and HIV testing, and the Community Law Centre's submission on courts, parenting rights and corporal punishment, focussed on specific legal problems.

Submissions from the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS), Johannesburg Child Welfare Society, Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN), Network Against Child Labour (NACL) and the HIV sector (presented by the Children's Institute on behalf of a number of organisations), stressed the need for poverty alleviation, early intervention and support for families to care for children. These submissions clearly demonstrated that these areas need urgent policy choices and committed resources in order to address the increasing strain experienced by children and families due to the rising

levels of poverty, unemployment and HIV infection.

Focussed sub-sector submissions from the National Alliance for Street Children, NACCW, Lawyers for Human Rights and the Disabled Children's Action Group (DICAG) provided overviews of the problems facing the sub-sectors and made proposals for how these systemic problems could be addressed through the Bill.

The submissions mentioned above are just examples of the excellent submissions that were made from a range of children's sector organisations. If you would like to see the full list of submissions and the minutes of the hearings, take a look at the Parliamentary Monitoring Group website (<http://www.pmg.org.za>).

The mix of submissions seems to have been successful. However, some MPs suggested that next time there should be more submissions from rural organisations. Others felt that they needed more technical legal arguments and solutions. We need to consider these suggestions when we plan for the next round of hearings on the section 76 Bill, sometime in 2005. These hearings may be in Cape Town or in the provinces, before the provincial parliaments. You will be informed as soon as they are announced.

Developments after the hearings

After a well deserved break, the MPs and the Executive Steering Committee came back to Parliament later in August to start the deliberations process. The top issue on the agenda was the National Policy Framework (NPF) proposed in the SALC Children's Bill, and whether the NPF would adequately address the problem of lack of co-ordination between government departments, levels of government and civil society.

Parliament called each affected government department to give its view on co-ordination, and on their respective duties in terms of the Bill. It was clear from the different departments presentations that co-ordination was lacking, and that the different departments did not have a common vision and plan for the way forward. This left Parliament in a rather difficult position, and tensions ran high as everyone tried to grapple with the complex political and technical issues of co-operative governance and inter-sectoral co-ordination.

The tension subsided considerably when Dr Maria Mabetoa, the chairperson of the Executive Steering Committee, and Chief Director of Children and Families in the Department of Social Development, made a presentation on the Bill and the NPF in particular, showing that the Steering Committee was starting to come to a point of consensus. From her presentation it was clear that the Department of Social Development, and most of the affected departments recognise the need for better co-ordination - and are mostly in favour of the re-insertion of the NPF, albeit in a different form in order to ensure that it complies with government's existing co-ordination mechanisms and co-operative governance policies.

Dr Mabetoa proposed that the recently completed *Draft National Policy Framework and Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Management of Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation* could be used as a basis for the NPF. This draft policy was drafted by an inter-sectoral team including members of the Executive Steering Committee and the Children's Bill Working Group, over a period of a few years. However the draft policy is focussed mainly on the formal child protection system. In recognition of this limitation, Dr Mabetoa said that the draft policy would need to be broadened to extend its reach beyond the formal child protection system to include provisioning for all children, especially those in difficult circumstances, as well as provisioning for primary prevention and early intervention. The sub-sector policies such as the draft ECD Policy and Draft Child Labour White Paper would continue to stand alone, but would fall under the co-ordinating umbrella of the NPF.

However, there is still much information and discussion needed before the Executive Steering Committee and Parliament can start making decisions. While technically the decision making rests with Parliament now that the Bill has been tabled, it is important that the Executive Steering Committee supports Parliament in its law-making function, by presenting Parliament with clear policy positions and the detailed information that Parliament needs to make well informed decisions. On the other side of the coin, in order to enable the Executive Steering Committee to come to a consensus that works for everyone, the departmental officials on the Steering Committee need to be adequately supported by their Directors General and Ministers. These people need to make the Children's Bill a priority issue over the next six months in order to enable Parliament to move forward with the process.

What lies ahead?

The MPs are now on a constituency break, and will be back in Parliament on the 18th of October. We will then find out how the process will be moving forward. However, as matters stand now, the section 75 Bill will definitely not be passed by the end of 2004. Over the next four months remaining in the year, we will therefore need to dedicate most of our time to contributing to the section 75 Bill debates. With regards to the section 76 Bill, it would be a good idea to start our consultation processes within our own sub-sectors in order to be ready in mid 2005, which is the earliest that we can expect the section 76 Bill to be tabled in Parliament.

If you would like to join the e-mail stakeholder list and receive updates on a monthly basis please contact Elizabeth Myburgh on emyburgh@rmh.uct.ac.za. If you need more detailed information Elizabeth will also be able to help you or refer you to the relevant person in the Working Group who can help you with your query. *Child and Youth Care* will continue to keep readers updated on the process. ▲

Writing Reports and Responding to Them



Adapted from: *You're not on your own, A Management Guide for Development Organisations in South Africa*

Introduction

An important way of communicating in organisations is by means of reports. There are many different types of reports. For example there are annual reports, feedback reports, financial reports, fundraising reports, internal reports, reports on research or on a needs assessment that was done, and so on. Reports are used when you want to send factual information that you want people to be aware of or understand.

Four Key Questions

When you write a report it helps if you answer the four key questions of communication:

What do I want to communicate?

This will help you to decide what information to put into the report, and what to leave out. For example, Izintaba Community support Programme has recently completed a workshop for educare workers in the area of Nezo. They need to write a report on the workshop. *The report they write should only include factual information about that particular workshop.*



© Benny Gool

Who do I want to communicate to?

Decide who it is that you are wanting to receive this information, is it members of the board, the management committee, the community, the Department etc. Knowing this will help you decide how much detail to include, what language or language level to use. This will also help you to decide on the amount of detail required in the report.

Why do I want to communicate it to them?

What is the purpose of the report? Is it just to keep people informed, or do you need them to take action? If you need them to take action, have you given them enough information? Is it clear in the report what action you would like them to take? Answering these questions will help you to make sure that you get the response you would like from the report. The purpose of the Izintaba report on the educare workshops was to act as a record of activities, and to create awareness of the organisation's activities. It did not need anyone to take action.

What is the best way of communicating it to them?

What style should you use? Should you include other documentation for reference purposes, rather than including too much detail in the actual report? You may also decide that you need to follow up the report with a telephone discussion or that it needs to be presented verbally.

Things to Remember When Communicating in Writing

Whenever you communicate in writing, remember:

Be brief:

- Use short words
- Use short sentences
- Use short paragraphs
- Don't repeat yourself

Be direct:

- Get to the point
- Say what you mean

Be simple:

- Use familiar words that everyone will understand

Things that can make good communication go wrong

We all want the communication in our organisations to be good, but there are many things that get in the way of communication being useful. Here are some of the things that can cause bad communication:

- The *reason* you have sent the message is confusing
- The message does not give enough *information*
- The *form* you sent the message in doesn't fit the message
- Some people who should get the message don't get it
- There are *problems with language* – perhaps it is too difficult
- You do not speak or write *clearly*
- You choose a *bad time* to give the message
- The target audience doesn't want to hear the message
- The target audience misunderstands the message
- The target audience doesn't like the *communication style* of the sender.

Feedback

Feedback happens all the time. It is very important that we are able to give and receive feedback in ways that build people and the organisation.

Feedback can be formal or informal. Formal feedback is when you write a memo or report or have a meeting in response to information. An example of informal feedback is when you remark to someone in the organisation that they have written a good report, or you ask them not to be late for a meeting again.

An important part of good communication is to be able to give and receive constructively.

Do's and don'ts for giving constructive feedback

- Be specific
- Respond quickly – don't wait four months to respond to a report
- Choose the time to respond carefully
- Give positive suggestions about negative feedback

Do's and don'ts for receiving feedback constructively

- Listen carefully to feedback
- Don't take every criticism personally
- Don't respond to negative feedback emotionally
- Don't assume that because one person doesn't like or agree with what you have said or written that no-one will
- Feel comfortable with positive feedback – thank the person for it. ▲

Reference

Rockey, Vanessa, 1995, You're not on your own, Researched and compiled by of BMI (Pty) Ltd for Eskom Community Development



Mark Gamble

Chairperson of the NACCW Western Cape Region

It all started on a sand dune, watching a group of children running and doing somersaults. I was twenty-four and working in environmental education. I remember saying to a colleague sitting next to me, that teaching children about the plants and animals did not make sense anymore. So many of the children seemed preoccupied with the stuff of drugs, alcohol, abuse and the like.

And that was the start of my Child and Youth Care journey.

Those first initial enquiries into this field brought the gifts of meeting with Brian Gannon, Merle Allsopp and Jeannie Karth. Three of the finest and kindest. I wonder what they thought when they met this wild and woolly youngster? Whatever they thought, they provided place for me, acceptance and recognition of my strengths.

For me, the greatest teachings in Child and Youth Care have come not from formal education, but from people. I have been gifted with the opportunity to learn from poor practice, mine and others, yet at all times have had a circle of profound people around me to support my development. So I have been very fortunate in this.

Powerful moments in my career. Two I believe worth mentioning. The first Educo Africa wilderness programme for at-risk youth. Sitting on top of a mountain with the full moon bathing us in a gentle light. Listening to twelve young people talk of their dreams. And the second, Don Mattera speaking at the 2001 NACCW Biennial Conference. Speaking to me and 600 others, at a time when I was done – finished with the stuff of child and youth care. Dreaming of solitude and mountains. I listened to this man talk, and my heart opened again to our work. I was able to move forward as a child and youth care worker.

I love this work, love the play of light and shadow, of potential, resiliency and hope. We work in absolute aliveness.

And I have a family, my blessing. We have two children, Emma who is four and James five months. Laughter and chaos run rampant in our little world. At age 36 my heart is full. I am a very lucky man. ▲

Developing Empathy Games

By Edna Rooth

Introduction

The ability to understand other people - to develop a strong sense of who they are and what they are going through - is indispensable for facilitators, community workers, teachers and leaders. The ability to empathise is an essential lifeskill.

To *empathise* means to understand - without judging or using preconceived ideas - the reasons for a person's feelings and behaviour. The concept of unconditional positive regard is closely related to that of empathy. Unconditional positive regard is the acceptance, respect, appreciation and tolerance that an individual is offered, without preconditions or expectations. The *person* is accepted as is - the person's behaviour may be criticised or rejected, but not the person as such.

Empathy does not mean that we have to agree with a person's behaviour. It simply means that we understand why that behaviour is occurring.

A number of games, exercises and activities are offered which aim to increase participants' levels of empathy and understanding.

These exercises are to be used with care as they are all very evocative.

Swopping Shoes

- Ask all the participants to get into a circle, take off their right shoes and throw them towards the centre of the circle.
- Give them the following instructions: Take any shoe that doesn't belong to you and go back to your seat. Have a good look at the shoe. Then put it on! If some of the participants complain, repeat the instruction calmly and advise those who have chosen too small a shoe to put just their toes in so as not to damage it.
- Now instruct the participants to go for a walk around

the room. Give them a few minutes to experience walking in someone else's shoes.

- Call everyone back to their chairs. They are allowed to take off the shoes but must hold on to them for the time being.
- Go around the group to find out how people experienced the activity. Follow responses very closely and expand on comments like 'I had to adjust the way I walk', 'The shoe was much warmer / colder than mine' and 'it felt funny with a smaller / bigger / higher / flatter shoe'.
- The insight the group gains from this exercise is that to achieve communication based on true understanding, we may have to adjust the way we see things, change the way we think and alter the ideas we have about people. The participants also realise that empathy may cause some discomfort, and a great deal of compromise.



Prior to the workshop, participants will often have heard it said that one has to learn to walk in other people's shoes. Through this exercise they come to appreciate that this simple idiom requires constant effort to achieve. Returning the shoes to their owners requires sensitivity: a seldom shared extension of each participant's self has been exposed to someone else. The next exercise provides ways of doing this.

Fear In A Frisbee

Get the group to sit in a close circle. Hand out small pieces of paper with the following words on them: 'My greatest fear is...'. Ask all participants to complete the sentence on their piece of paper by naming a great personal fear. This is done anonymously: participants should not share their fears with anybody. *The process is important, not who wrote down what fear.*

Explain to the group that you are going to gather all the fears, mix them up and pass them around again. Each participant will then pick a fear and read it out as if it were their own.

Collect all the fears in a frisbee, box or basket. Tell participants that if they pick their own fear, they must put it back and take another. The exercise is most effective when participants speak without first preparing themselves. This makes things less tedious and more realistic. In day-to-day interactions, there are few opportunities for preparation. Thinking on our feet should be practised as often as possible as this is a skill which can be improved.

Once a participant has read out the fear as if it were her own, she briefly explains the fear and tells the group how it makes her feel. The facilitator must gently remind people to read out the fears as if they were their own. If a person says 'this fear really is not mine but I can relate to it' you need to stop her and ask her to read out the fear again, starting with 'my greatest fear is ...'. Participants have to own the fear. Point out that the less a person can identify with a fear, the more of a (earning opportunity this is as the challenge to develop empathy is much greater.

For example, a participant picks a slip of paper with the fear 'failure'. She reads out the fear as if it were her own, even if she has never thought of this fear or cannot relate to it:

My greatest fear is failure. The reason why I fear failure is that I am terrified of being rejected by people who expect me to be successful. Will my loved ones still care for me if I am a failure? I fear leading a life that is meaningless and empty, and dying totally unknown and useless. I do not think that I can live with myself if I am a failure, as I set high standards for myself. This fear causes me anxiety and I often feel insecure and keep evaluating and comparing myself with others.

The participant has focused on what the fear *means* to her, what it makes her *feel* and on what it *does* to her. This is all that is required. There is no need for her to try to resolve the fear. The group is not allowed to comment at this stage – their task is to *listen* as carefully



as they can. Participants will be given the opportunity to comment after the exercise.

The fears most often mentioned are loneliness, physical violence, death, failure, being ridiculed, debilitating illness, being unemployed, losing a loved one and concern for children and dependants.

After each person has had a turn, give all the participants the opportunity of saying how they felt when their fears were being read out. The participants need not name the fear, nor should they identify the person who picked their fear. If they need to discuss further the way their fears were dealt with, they can do so privately with the person concerned.

Some participants may tell the group that their fears seem less overwhelming now that they have heard them being discussed by someone else. Some people may come to terms with their fears, others may see them as less threatening. Usually, a number of fears are similar: knowing that they are not alone with their fears gives participants greater confidence. Most group members will be able to relate to many of the fears mentioned.

As a final activity, get the participants to shake their hands about until they tingle, thereby symbolising that they are throwing their fears back into the universe. People should shake their hands quite rapidly. This helps the transition from this activity to the next and also helps participants to get rid of tension and distance themselves from their fears.

This is an excellent exercise for developing empathy. Variations can be used for further practice. Participants can look at topics like 'My Greatest Joy', 'My Vision for the Future', or 'My Greatest Sorrow'.

The facilitator needs to be aware of the evocative, emotionally moving and bonding effects of this exercise and to choose the next activity carefully. A break at this stage is appropriate. Alternatively an individual, nonverbal activity can be given such as drawing, or

playing musical instruments, or a massage train.

A massage train is a short activity where participants stand in a line or a circle, and rest their hands gently on top of the shoulders of the person in front, or on the left or right. The task is to massage *very gently* the neck and shoulders, constantly checking whether the person is comfortable, and is not being hurt. The line or circle can shuffle forward or to the side. Play soft music. After a few minutes, ask participants to turn around and massage the person who was massaging them. Ensure that all participants are being massaged, unless they indicate that they do not want to join in.

This is a short activity, which takes about seven minutes. It relaxes, energises and bonds the group.

Walk The Walk

In this exercise the whole group has to walk and perform an action like a person in one of the following situations:

- You are dying
- You are drunk
- You are ecstatic
- You are depressed
- You are helpful
- Every step you take is your last step
- You are just learning to walk
- You are lonely
- You are old
- Your house has burnt down
- You are afraid
- You are filled with joy

Use any theme or combination of themes appropriate to the group. Remember always to end with a positive walk and to allow time for discussion. How did the group feel and what did they learn?

An alternative is to have a bag containing a wide selection of hats. These can range from festive to formal, shower cap to crown, veiled hat to scarf. All kinds of headgear is useful.

Each person in turn picks a hat and walks the walk of people normally associated with that type of hat. The rest of the group must copy the walk and add their own dimension to it. Use the entire room area for this exercise.

Ask the participants to add to the effect by making appropriate sounds (not words) while they walk. For example, a person with a sweatband may start panting and grunting and the rest of the group will follow suit.

Let the group discuss the implications of the exercise and their feelings regarding it.

Guess My Feeling

- Have the participants stand in a circle. Tell them to identify a strong feeling they have on that day.
- Each person then mimes the feeling i.e. they perform actions that symbolise it.
- The entire space inside the circle can be used if so desired.

- At the end of their mime, participants may say their names in a tone of voice expressing the feeling they were depicting.
- The group's tasks are to observe very closely, to repeat each mime accurately and to say the person's name in the same way she said it.
- The group repeats each mime three times while the person who did the mime stands observing. If she is not satisfied that the group has been accurate in its reflection, she can ask the group to repeat the entire cycle of three mimes.
- After the person has indicated satisfaction, the group must guess what feeling was being expressed.
- Continue until every person has had a chance.



Similarities Game

See yourself in others ...

Then whom can you hurt? What harm can you do?

The participants split up into small groups and brainstorm the **similarities** they share with each other. The focus of the groups should be only on the similarities; ensure that groups do not get caught up with differences.

To help participants, call out categories, or give each group categories to use as a starting point. Eventually most groups are able to devise their own categories or means for looking at similarities. Examples of categories are:

- people who are vegetarians
- people who were in exile
- people who hated school
- people who watch TV
- people who are romantic
- people who love mangos
- people who belong to the ANC
- people who love cats

Reference

Rooth, E. 1995. Lifeskills A Resource Book for Facilitators. Macmillan Boleswa: Swaziland

Creating Your Own Future

...an extract from a presentation by Anton Musgrave given at the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa Conference

One of the most identifiable trends in the world over the last 30 years has been a move towards greater personal freedom for individuals. This freedom brings with it greater responsibility and the need for more personal advice than ever before. In today's world, change is the only constant. It is therefore important to understand these dynamics from a cultural, technological and work point of view so that you can make informed decisions about your career and life. An inflection point (a sudden change in direction) in the late 1960s marked the "era of the individual". We have seen central structures disappearing, creating greater freedom for the individual. Of course, this means greater personal responsibility.

What is likely to happen?

Networks will replace structures. Your place in life will be determined by your networks – not by your place in the structure. Your position will not determine how people treat you. Rather how you manage relationships will be the determining factor of your authority. Previously, competency and specific skills were important but the future is about relationships and generic skills.

Technology – what has changed?

Technology has allowed the individual more freedom and productivity. For example, families used to have one landline. Now individuals have their own cell phones. This has caused a shift from place to person – we do not phone a place anymore, we phone an individual. Increasing mobility combined with stronger networks will mean that your skill in interacting with other people will become more important. Prepare yourself for this rapidly changing environment, and be prepared for life-long learning!

Business – what has changed?

People now worry about deflation instead of inflation.

Today, the main problem is a surplus of resources. We are also seeing manufacturers charge the same price of increased quantities of goods. Cool drink manufacturers in the USA have increased packaged amounts yet their prices have remained the same. As a result, obesity is a national epidemic for the first time in many countries. Technology has allowed businesses to increase production using fewer resources. As we see machines replacing functions previously performed by humans, we will see less of a demand for people as a resource in specific industries.

What does this mean for you?

Innovation has replaced standardization. Children have always been taught to conform – not to stand out from the crowd. But Individuals need to innovate because ideas fuel today's economy. Now, more than ever, conformation will make you irrelevant! So we need to be creating opportunities for children to develop their creativity. In this highly networked environment, attitude has also replaced experience. Your attitude towards your environment and the people around you will "make or break" you – remember, the future is about relationships! Your ability to connect and network is vital.

What are the lessons for creating your future?

- Understand the future – the world is changing so fast that the past is becoming increasingly irrelevant.
- Never stop learning – we are moving into an age of life-time learning.
- Stay relevant to the economy – offer something that someone else values.
- Understand why and how people differ.
- Do not compete! Find where you can be unique.
- Never be scared to challenge and question.
- Ideas and the ability to make them happen are real success drivers. ▲

“Dikwankwetla – children in action”

Introduction by Namhla Mniki

“Dikwankwetla – children in action”, is a group of twelve children from around South Africa who have come together to look at and discuss the Children’s Bill. Since the debates and discussions around the Children’s Bill began, the children’s sector in SA has taken the effort to organize themselves into a working group that would interrogate the legislation. As part of this process, it became apparent that child participation was necessary for children to engage with the Bill, and raise their concerns. The Children’s Institute in the University of Cape Town thus initiated the Children’s Bill Child Participation Project. The main aim of this project is to involve children in the debates and decision-making processes that will inform the final provisions of the Bill, with a particular emphasis on children made vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Twelve children between the ages of 12 and 17 years were selected from partner organizations in Limpopo Province, Western Cape, Kwa-Zulu-Natal and North West to participate in this process. In order to equip the children to engage with the Children’s Bill and to articulate their opinions about it, a capacity building program was designed. This entailed participatory workshops focusing on “Developing Legislative Literacy” and “Supporting The Children To Become Advocates”. Members of Dikwankwetla have spent the last eight months talking to their friends, teachers, and parents about the Children’s Bill. They have also spoken to children in schools, churches, and decision makers such as mayors in their provinces.

In July 2004 members of Dikwankwetla gave a submission into parliament. The submission contained thoughts and opinions of the children about certain sections of the Children’s Bill, including Children’s Rights, prevention of child abuse and neglect, protection from child abuse and neglect, parental responsibilities, HIV/AIDS, and poverty.

This was followed by a presentation in parliament on the 11th of August, where the children addressed members of parliament belonging to the Portfolio Committee On Social Development, and other stakeholders. The children articulated their concerns very convincingly, and substantiated their views thoroughly. They impressed all in attendance. Here are some examples of their submissions.



tion”



“Good morning honorable members of parliament.

My name is Kortez and I am 16 years old. They call me Kortez because I am short! I come from the city of Goodwill, Mafikeng.

Over the past few months, we have learned the procedures for making law and that everybody can have a say in the making of a law and it is up to parliament to decide whether what we say should be included in the law or not. Today, we are making recommendations that we have come up with during our workshops over the last year.

Children in South Africa are abused each and every day – sexually, physically and emotionally. This is because most of them don’t know that they have the right to say no, others are too young to say no, or are incapable of saying no, and others are deprived of their rights.

Please raise awareness about child abuse. Those who are already abused should get counselling.

The person who is abusive must be the one who is removed from home, not the child. If a child has to be removed, the first option for places of safety should be in the community, so that a child can still go to the same school and have the same friends.

Anyone who knows about somebody abusing a child must report it, whoever they are. Because protecting children is a community’s responsibility. Other things that can be done to protect children from abuse should include:-

- Empowering children to look after and protect themselves, even though the primary responsibility lies with the care-giver.
- Making court processes easier for children to access e.g. going to court should be free.
- The court must stop abusive care-givers from seeing their children.
- Government must bring more social workers nearer to communities where they are needed.
- Government must create a 24 hour toll free number in different

languages where children can call to report abuse.

We think that every child in South Africa has the right to be protected from any kind of abuse. And this should be in the Children’s Bill.”

Child Rights

“My name is Nkosingiphile. I have one sister. And one brother. I don’t have a mom. I am in grade 7. My hobbies are playing soccer. And I am a champion zulu dancer at school! I believe that we are free because we have rights – GOOD RIGHTS.

The right to food: A child we know lives with her grandparents in a one room house. Her mother is passed away. She does not have clothes, and sometimes they don’t have food. They are sleeping with hunger because of money. Some children have to take care of their sisters and brothers. They are responsible for making sure that their brothers and sisters don’t sleep without eating something.

The right to water: Many children have to walk many kilometres to get water. It affects your education because you go to fetch water and miss school. You cannot live without water.

The right to shelter: When I had nowhere to go, I went to sleep at my school. Many children do not have shelter, or they live in broken houses with broken windows and roofs.”

“I’m Rebecca from Kwazulu. I am an orphan. At home I live with my older sisters. I grow the garden there. I have green fingers! But this year all the plants are not there because there was no water... I am also going to talk about children’s rights. We have the right to be a child: Any child should be treated and understood as a child otherwise there can be a lot of complications, like children being soldiers, older men marrying younger women, children looking after families and so on.

The right to identity: Most children

Voices of Youth

in South Africa don't have identity, this is because their parents don't have I.D., or they don't know the importance of identity. And this is a major problem when they have to go to school or apply for support grants and stuff. I think children should get identity even when their parents don't have one. Because if they don't have birth certificate, they don't get access to things they should have. Every child should have the right to know his/her citizenship. I suggest this should be included in the children's bill.

We have the right to speak and be listened to: Because we live in the same country, we should be free to give our opinions and for people to listen to it. Children have the right to participate in decisions about who will care for them."



"My name is Kurt. I stand here today not only for myself, but on behalf of the future of this country, its youth. I am going to talk about children's rights.

The right to education: Government must make certain that all children go to school once old enough, that Grade R and pre-school be included in the curriculum. Some children struggle to pay school fees: they get chased away when they cannot pay. Classes are overcrowded and students cannot get the high quality education they are entitled to. We need more teachers and more classrooms and schools. But how can children be expected to do well in school if they do not have food at home? That is why we children suggest that the government must

supply schools with nutritious food so that they can do their best and be the people they want to be.

The right to health care: A child we know was bitten by a snake. She didn't go to the hospital because it is too far and you cannot get cured if you don't have money. The family didn't have money for the transport and hospital fee. She stayed at home with pains until the school principal noticed after three days. She uses her money to send her to the hospital.

For better health care, we recommend that:

- Nurses must come to schools to make sure children get well and give information about HIV/AIDS, Abstinence and Protection.
- There should be first aid kits in schools for emergencies and accidents.
- Clinics and hospitals should be child-friendly, like if a girl is pregnant, nurses must not shout at her.
- Parents must be responsible for their children's health and take children to clinics and hospitals when they are sick.
- Clinics and hospitals should be nearer to the community, especially in farms and rural areas.

The right to be looked after and have a home: There are some children who are orphans in our communities. Sometimes they are not taken care of by relatives who care about them.

Orphans must be able to choose who they want to live with.

The right to equal opportunities and to development: Children in different areas might have the same abilities but some are without opportunities. Their ability might not be developed, they might not reach their potential."

Parental Rights And Responsibilities

"My name is Rebaone and I am 16 years old. I am going to talk about Parental Rights and Responsibilities. I am very concerned about the children who are taking care of their siblings. I myself have an experience



of what I am talking about, and I also know other children who are younger than me who are suffering from this problem. I've got 6 other siblings, 4 of which are HIV positive. I am taking care of my four siblings with my old grandmother and that doesn't mean my mother is not alive. She is very alive but the problem is that she doesn't stay at home with us and take care of us. She is always away and when she comes home she comes drunk and she abuses us emotionally. This affects me mentally. I cannot cope well with my school and I don't have enough time to rest.

I think that every child has a right to play and a right to rest and I also think that it must be in the children's bill. Please help for this to be possible. Children who are taking care of siblings must have someone who can help them take care of their siblings – for example NGOs etc. I also think that we as children have the right not to suffer from mental illness because of the troubles we experience at home.

Good afternoon, my name is Holly. We said that caregivers should:

- Take children to the doctor when they are sick.
- Give children healthy nutritious





food.

- Caregivers should make sure that children get an education by paying for school fees, or organising subsidies or alternative options, buying uniform and paying for transport to school.
- They should listen to children, set reasonable rules, provide discipline and give advice when needed.
- Caregivers should care for, love and protect children to the best of their abilities.
- Respect children. This means they must not beat children, humiliate them or use them for labour.
- Provide children with clothes and shelter.
- Help children to make the best decisions for their lives.

We drew up a list of things care-givers should NOT do:

- They should not drink too much alcohol or partake in illegal substances.
- They should not abuse children by shouting at them, insulting them, being sarcastic and saying hurtful things. They should not abuse them physically, mentally or emotionally.
- They should not bring down a child's self esteem.



- They should not ignore children by not talking to them and not listening to them.
- They should not neglect children and make them feel unwanted.
- They should not be unfriendly to children."

Protection

"My name is Tebogo. I come from Limpopo in Polokwane. I like to play. My younger sister aged 8 years was raped by a person. My mother sent her to buy cooking oil late, at about 6.30 pm and she met the rapist. The rapist asked her for directions to another shop, and then they went together and instead of going to the shop he took her to the river bank and raped her. This thing was not going to happen if my mother did not send my sister to shop at night. I think that if parents could know their rights and responsibilities these things would not happen. Children would be protected."

"Igama lami ngiwu Sihle osuka Kwazulu Natal. Ngifunda Grade 7. Ngiwumfana oneminyaka engu 16. Nginenkinga eyodwa inkinga yami ukuthi angitholi ukuthula ngenxa kababa kusukela ekushoneni kuka mama. Ngicela ukuthi noma ubani awahloniphe amalungelo ezingane ngisho, umzali wakho uqobo. Nani ningamalunga ekomiti nibenesiqiniseko sokuthi ayahlonishwa amalungelo ethu singathenjiswa ukushaywa nokuxhoshwa emakhaya. Ngingajabula uma kungenzeka kanjengoba ngishilo."

Corporal Punishment

"I am Rebecca. Some of us have been treated like slaves at home, and have been beaten by our families. We know of children who are beaten with broomsticks when they do not finish all the jobs they have, or who have stones thrown at them. We don't think that this is right. We think that it is abuse if you hit a child repeatedly, or when you hit a child until he/she bleeds or have bruises, or if you use something

dangerous like glasses or a hard belt.

Most of us think that hitting a child is wrong, under any circumstances. If adults hit children, they create a scary environment.

We think that a better way of disciplining a child is talking to him so that the child can understand what you telling them to do. When you talk to children you must not shout and yell at them, you should also show concern and be calm. And if children don't follow, then you give them a small punishment. For example, maybe if you're a boy, they can tell you to clean up the whole house for the whole week, and if you're a girl, then they can tell you to cook for everyone in the house. Some of the Dikwankwetla said that girls could also be punished by



having to do the garden because they thought that most of the girls hate doing the garden – but that wouldn't work for me because I love my garden!"

Conclusion

"Presenter: Kurt

We really thank you for giving us this opportunity to tell you about our problems. And we really hope that what we have said will be taken into consideration. We know that when it comes to children, you are not just members of parliament, you are also mothers and fathers.

We hope that you will act on what we are saying – listen and take action because you are the ones who have power to determine the fate of this nation." ▲

Information on SAQA goes to Workers

Sandra Oosthuizen

The NACCW has recognised the need for interactive information-sharing on subjects linked to SAQA. Leadership representatives of the Association came together in the first two-day workshop held in Port Elizabeth in June 2004. At this meeting NACCW representatives from all eleven regions noted the following:

- The SAQA process, and the skills development process have the potential to impact positively on the quality of services delivered to children, youth and families.
- Recognition of prior learning will ensure that previous learning will not be wasted, but that people can obtain credits for their learning which will be measured against the unit standards written by the Child and Youth Care Work Standards Generating Body.
- Consequently it is critical for the field to get to grips with this information as soon as possible, as it provides a financial resource for skills development for our poorly resourced field.

Information on the SAQA process was recently taken to the regions in a one-day workshop in each of six regions. Workshops will also soon be held in Limpopo, Gauteng and the Southern Cape. Below are some observations noted from the

workshops held to date:

- There was great enthusiasm about the information in all the regions. Members were very keen to learn more about how they need to interact with the information in order to get the most positive results. It was heartening and encouraging to recognise the positive attitude with which the field is approaching this complex issue.
- Disappointingly, very few managers of organizations attended the workshops. Members felt that the information is critical for managers, as the different processes require action from them. Child and youth care workers are concerned that they themselves will lose out on opportunities to be trained using the resources offered by the Department of Labour through the SETAs, due to their managers being uninformed. In every region, membership requested the Association to consider offering a similar workshop for managers. It was pointed out that *all* members of the Association had been invited to the workshops. Participants were encouraged to take the information back to their managers, and were informed that as employees they have a right to skills development as stated in the

Skills Development Act of 1998. Managers of facilities are required to access skills development funding through the SETA's. This is done by submitting a Workplace Skills Plan, and is not optional for managers. Should employees be concerned that their managers were not following up on this process, they could approach higher authorities like the management boards, or approach their labour unions or alternatively the Department of Labour. Many participants were encouraged by this information.

- The concept of recognition of prior learning was a great relief to all, as many people have done many short courses with the NACCW and feel they do not want to 'relearn' everything. This concept also applies to those who have been working in the field for many years, who have not had the privilege of formal education, but have acquired learning in informal and non-formal ways.
- There is both great excitement, and great concern about developing competencies according to SAQA qualifications and unit standards in relation to the professional board for child and youth care work. The excitement relates to the fact that there will be opportunities afforded to become more competent, and that the practice of child and youth care workers will be regulated by a statutory body. The concern for most related to whether they would be able to achieve these competencies in the time-frames which might be required by the board, in order to register as a professional child and youth care worker.

The NACCW thanks The Royal Netherlands Embassy for making funds available to take the SAQA information to its members. ▲

Please continue to forward questions to The Director, NACCW, PO Box 36407, Glosderry, 7702 or fax 021-762 5352.

Eastern Cape Region Mini-Conference



At the end of the 13th Biennial Conference there was a collective sigh of relief and even the occasional “never again” in our region, as far as organizing conferences goes! However the need for humans to repeat that which causes stress or a state of imbalance, drove us to do it again – only this time only on a smaller scale.

On the 1st and 2nd July 2004 we hosted a mini-conference with the theme: “Children Deprived of Development”. We wanted to explore the causes and effects of developmental deprivation on young people, and to identify intervention strategies and advocacy roles of child and youth care workers and other role players. There was a very positive response from people who were willing to contribute to the conference. The result was a nicely rounded set of breakaways that dealt with issues including: the President’s Award; neighborhood responses to child protection; practical strategies for teaching values; and behaviour management.

The presenters were people who have contributed in various ways to the field, and included our friend Cecil Wood, social workers from the A.C.V.V. now working for the Presidents Award and also from the Department of Social Development. Mrs. Casoojee from this Department reinforced the contribution made by Ashley Theron regarding the policies affecting children. Serious issues were raised regarding the slow payment to NPOs by the Department, and the changes made to the Children’s Bill. The seventy-seven childcare practitioners hailing from as far afield as the Southern Cape and the Border who attended the conference, left with the knowledge that there is much work to be done – especially in light of the fact that child care is becoming recognized as a profession. We also hope that they left with renewed vigor, and the sense that we are part of a larger national and international ‘family’ working together and making a difference to the children in this country. ▲

Harold Slabbert



HIV/AIDS and household food security:

Part One – Defining the crisis

Prof. FJ Veldman
Central University of Technology – Free State

Southern Africa is currently experiencing its worst food security emergency in a decade. In Zimbabwe the food security crisis is particularly severe, with over half of the country's population requiring food assistance (1).

The immediate cause of a regional food security emergency is often cited as poor rains, leading to marked reductions in agricultural production. However, this simple explanation masks a range of underlying factors that have an impact on food security in any region. These include, governance issues, the cumulative effect of periodic droughts, dietary patterns that emphasize maize, the varied impacts of structural adjustment programs, weak government safety net programs, government policies that inhibit free market performance, international terms of trade, chronic poverty and HIV/AIDS.

The economic stress caused by HIV/AIDS can become so severe upon a household, that engaging or continuing income generating activities is no longer an option. The role of HIV/AIDS in the Southern African food emergency highlights the fact that the disease is a critical livelihoods and rights issue, seriously compromising access to food at household level.

It is now recognized that household food security in rural and urban Southern Africa cannot be properly understood if HIV/AIDS is not factored into the analysis. HIV/AIDS can, on one hand, be treated in its own right as a shock to household food security, but on the other, it has such distinct effects that it is a shock like no other. Already vulnerable households become even more vulnerable with the effects of HIV/AIDS. The epidemiology of the disease makes its effects different from other common diseases, such as malaria. Some authors argue that HIV/AIDS affected households never fully cope, in the sense that they cannot simply return to some semblance of normality following such a shock (2). De Waal and Tumushabe (2003) make a similar case, arguing that HIV/AIDS affected households may escape complete demise in the face of a food security shock through various "coping strategies", but cannot escape the longer-term downward trend in food security (3).

It seems that the following household types are the most likely to be reliant on community support than others:

- Households in which both the spouse and the head are chronically sick;

- Households with recent deaths amongst active adults;
- Households in which the head is chronically sick;
- And households headed by single elderly females.

The cumulative impacts of HIV/AIDS on food availability, food access, and coping capacity are compounded, resulting in amplified negative impacts on overall household food security. Factors such as whether the household has an active adult present or a chronically ill person; whether the head of household is chronically ill; whether there is a high dependency ratio; or whether the household has taken in orphaned children, could worsen the situation. Each of these characteristics has further nuances that are affected by age and gender (1). The critical question for programming, policy, advocacy and research is: what can be done to prevent, slow or even reverse a downward spiraling livelihood trajectory for HIV/AIDS affected households?

When faced with a food shortage, most households ration food. Families confronted with a food shortage are forced to restrict the amount of food they consume, in part by cutting back on the number of meals they eat a day. For example, a three-meals-a-day pattern may be reduced to two meals a day – or one. In some circumstances, people may eat one meal every other day. These strategies will not relieve the situation much, especially for families that are already malnourished, but they are an indication of food shortage.

Some family caregivers may dilute meals with water making stew or gruel. Food may also be mixed with unusual substances such as bark. In some Asian countries, cereal may be mixed with grass seeds. Acute malnutrition occurs when people eat so little food that their body's store of nutrients is depleted. If the condition continues, people can die (4). Many households may be forced to subsist on non-conventional foods. These foods can make people more ill, but people eat them, because they temporarily appease hunger.

Two possible approaches can be applied to address food security emergencies: supplying food, and providing economic support. In most cases, food relief alone has a limited impact and is often counterproductive. Two broad strategies for ensuring food security have developed. The first, which revolves around food aid, can be called conventional relief. The second, which focuses on addressing the root causes of a food security emergency, is designed to prevent, contain and control such emergencies with a range of economic and market interventions. This is called counter-famine assistance. These approaches will be discussed in part two in the next issue. ▀

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Where Can I Find the Policy?

This is the third in a series of articles on the policy requirements in relation to services to children. It deals with Orphans and Vulnerable Children in the context of HIV/AIDS and the Social Development Policy and Legislation.

Introduction

This series was begun to answer the seemingly straightforward question "Where can I find the policy?" in relation to services for children made vulnerable by the HIV/AIDS crisis. As indicated in the two previous articles, the policy and legislative framework in this regard is complex and extensive, and must be thoroughly understood by prospective service providers. Services not contextualised within this framework are unlikely to find favour or support with the authorities, and often squander scarce donor resources. This article is adapted with permission from the publication by Sonia Giese, Helen Meintjies, Rhian Croke and Ross Chamberlain (2003) entitled "Health and Social Services to Address the Needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in the Context of HIV/AIDS: Research Report and Recommendations".

The Introduction of policy on Social Development

In 1994, restructuring of an extremely fragmented welfare system required the establishment of a single national welfare department, the phasing out of welfare disparities, legislative reform at all levels of government, human resource development and the re-orientation of personnel towards

a developmental social welfare framework.

A developmental social welfare framework refers to a welfare system which includes "an integrated and comprehensive system of social services, facilities, programmes and social security to promote social development, social justice and the social functioning of people" (Department of Welfare, 1997:7). This shift from a purely "welfare" approach to a "developmental" approach is encapsulated in the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), which sets out the principles, guidelines, policies and programs for developmental social welfare in South Africa in the post-1994 era (Department of Welfare, 1997). The White Paper recognises the "family" as "the basic unit of society" and states that "family life will be strengthened and promoted through family-oriented policies and programmes" (p.12). Family is defined in the document as "individuals who either by contract or agreement choose to live together intimately and function as a unit in a social and economic system.

The national goals of the Department of Social Development, as outlined in the White Paper, are to:

- "Facilitate the provision of appropriate developmental social welfare services to all South Africans, especially those living in

poverty, those who are vulnerable and those who have special needs".

- "Promote and strengthen partnerships between government, communities and organisations in civil society and in the private sector who are involved with the delivery of social services".
- "Promote social development intersectorally, both within the welfare departments and in collaboration with other government departments and non-governmental stakeholders".
- "Give effect to those international conventions of the United Nations system which have been ratified by the government, and which are pertinent to developmental social welfare".
- "Realise the relevant objectives of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)".

An important component of the developmental social welfare framework (and one that accounts for approximately 90% of the social development budget) is the Department's social security program. Social security interventions aim to protect all members of society from social risk and, in the case of children, to help caregivers to care for their children. The White Paper recognises the need for continued

provision of social security for persons with disabilities, and commits the Department to extending welfare services and social assistance to families caring for children with chronic diseases and HIV/AIDS. In the context of their obligations to uphold the provisions of the White Paper, the Minister of Social Development presented government's 5-year plan for social welfare in 2001. Priorities included:

- "Restoration of the ethics of care and human development into all programs. This requires the urgent rebuilding of family, community and social relations in order to promote social integration".
- "Implementation of an integrated poverty eradication strategy that provides direct benefits to those who are in greatest need within a sustainable developmental approach. This calls for addressing poverty in rural and urban areas with the prime beneficiaries being women, youth and children".
- "Provision of a range of services to support the community-based care and support of people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as those affected such as children who have been orphaned".
- "Making social welfare services accessible and available to people in rural, peri-urban and informal settlements, as well as ensuing equity in service provision".

Steps taken towards realising these intentions

Two important pieces of legislation govern social welfare and development services and support for children and their caregivers, namely the Child Care Act (to be replaced by the new Children's Bill) and the Social Assistance Act. Both these pieces of legislation are currently under review. The Child Care Act and Social Assistance Act form the cornerstones of the legislative framework which underpins social development initiatives, including policies, programmes and campaigns described late in this article.

Child Care Act (No. 74 of 1983)

This legislation provides a regulatory framework for meeting the needs of children "in need of care". It focuses on the child once the child has already suffered abuse or neglect and provides for the establishment of Children's Courts, and the appointment of Commissioners of Child Welfare, for the removal and placement of children and for the establishment of institutions for the residential care of children.

This important piece of legislation is currently under review and the revised **Children's Bill** is aimed at harmonising all relevant child care legislation in South Africa (including but not limited to the provisions of the Child Care Act); and at ensuring that the new provisions take into account South Africa's international law and constitutional obligations towards children.

In contrast to the existing Child Care Act (1983), the new draft Bill makes provision for a system that focuses not only on supporting children who are already "in need of care", but also preventing abuse and neglect, and actively supporting caregivers to care for their children (Proudlock, 2003).

Many of the provisions contained in the Children's Bill are relevant to the second important piece of legislation currently under review, namely the Social Assistance Act.

Social Assistance Act (No. 59 of 1992) and Regulations (1998 & 2001)

This governs the provisioning of social security grants for children. The Act outlines procedures to be followed in applications for all children's grants, including all related administrative issues. This includes the requirement that all applicants possess an identity document and, where applicable, proof of marriage and income.

The current social security system (Guthrie, 2002b) targets children most in need of special protection; children in poverty; children with severe disabilities; and children requiring alternative care. The provisioning in South Africa is mainly limited to non-

contributory cash transfers through means-tested grants, while there are some additional indirect benefits such as free basic health care for children under 6 and free primary education (for those unable to afford fees). Non-contributory cash transfers (grants) provided for in the legislation and aimed at children and "families" include the following:

- The Child Support Grant (CSG) for poor children under 7 years of age, now extended to children under 14: The CSG aims to help caregivers to provide for the basic needs of the child, and targets the poorest families by means-testing. The applicant must be the "primary caregiver" of the child.
- The Care Dependency Grant (CDG) for severely disabled children



requiring permanent home care: The CDG assists caregivers to care for children with physical or mental disabilities in their homes.

- The Foster Care Grant (FCG): The FCG is payable to a foster parent in respect of a foster child who has been legally placed in their custody in terms of the Child Care Act (Footner et al., 2000).

Social Development policies, programmes and campaigns

Minimum standards for South African child and youth care – transformation of the child and youth care system

In the last decade the roles of residential facilities and the training

and accreditation of child and youth care workers have undergone review. This has resulted in a set of minimum standards for the South African child and youth care system, directed at ensuring that - where possible - children and youth are cared for and protected within their "families" and/or communities of origin.

These minimum standards make provision for a range of services from prevention through early intervention to care requiring statutory intervention (where they become necessary), and govern shelters for children, children's homes, places of safety, schools of industry, and secure care and youth correctional facilities. These responses are regarded as a continuum of care from the least restrictive to the most restrictive



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(Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, 1998). In terms of resources and referrals, the system gives priority and preference to the less restrictive prevention and early intervention services, with an emphasis on ensuring that services strengthen the existing capacities of children and caregivers, develop new capacities and promote the resilience of "family and community based care".

Draft strategy on child protection in South Africa

The purpose of the National Child Protection Strategy is to effectively address child abuse, neglect and exploitation in an integrated manner. In theory the strategy is based

on a "holistic, intersectoral and multidisciplinary partnership" at national, provincial and local levels.

In line with other welfare policies, it prioritises the goal that children remain within their family and/or community wherever possible. However, the strategy is based on the fundamental rights of children to protective intervention when the family cannot or will not meet the child's basic needs or protect the child from harm, and recognises the right of children to be protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation within the family and school environments in particular.

Promoting access to grants

In a campaign to address barriers to grant access for children by raising awareness about grants and fast-tracking their birth registration, the Minister of Social Development set a target for the registration of 1 million children during the 2002/2003 financial year as the first step towards reaching the overall target of registering 3 million poor children by 2005. Several initiatives are in place to assist the Department in reaching their target. These initiatives include extensive registration and awareness campaigns, and the drafting of a multi-stakeholder business plan for a campaign entitled 'Lend a Hand - Build a better life for children' (September 2002).

The Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive Social Security System

In May 2000, the South African Government established an Inter-Ministerial Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive Social Security System, to undertake research and consultations around the current system's limitations and reform requirements. The Committee examined social protection issues with regard to poverty, health, unemployment, children, retirement, and measures to support people with special needs. Their report was delivered in March 2002.

The Committee calls for the important shift from social security

being merely 'safety nets' to being viewed as 'social protection', with social protection defined as providing "...the basic means for all people living in the country to effectively participate and advance in social and economic life, and in turn to contribute to social and economic development".

Development of standards and norms for social security delivery

The National Department of Social Development has been developing standards and norms to improve and standardise the delivery of social security benefits across provinces. These aim to improve and standardise administrative procedures. One proposed component is the development of 'one-stop' sites where an applicant will apply for a grant and be assessed, with approval or non-approval given immediately. It is hoped that once approved, the waiting period for grant payment will be reduced to 2 months. The Department has also introduced call centres, roadshows, mobile offices and other information campaigns to increase the uptake rates of children's grants.

Conclusion

Legislative reform currently underway within the Department of Social Development has the potential to transform welfare services and support for children in South Africa. In particular, an important area of redress is the recognition of poverty alleviation and development mechanisms as an integral part of a national response to the needs of vulnerable children. The challenge remains in the implementation of the recommended interventions and in ensuring access to a comprehensive social security package and package of social services for all children. ▲

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Television

Convenient Babysitter or Programming Tool?

Jackie Winfield



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The potential of residential facilities lies in their capacity to be used as environments in which every tiny detail is directed towards the developmental and therapeutic needs of the children and youth who are placed there. Every object, person, action, event, incident or other aspect of the total milieu can be utilised in a conscious way, so that it contributes to the overall programme. So, what is the role of television in residential programmes for children and youth at risk?

In some facilities, television might be used as a way to keep children entertained while the child and youth care worker is busy with something else. In this sense, television viewing is used as a kind of babysitter. It keeps the children in one place and hopefully, prevents them engaging in potentially harmful activities. On the other hand, it encourages children to remain sitting passively indoors, instead of participating in more active, potentially beneficial past-times. Outdoor activities often involve physical exercise in an environment where there is fresh air and natural light, all of which contribute to decreased stress levels.

For anxious young people who struggle with relationships, or fears of failure and incompetence, television may be an escape route. It may be an excuse not to engage in that dreaded game of soccer, or face a rejecting peer group, or to “forget” about tomorrow’s maths test which “I’ll fail no matter how hard I study”. Watching television restricts experience and provides little contribution to viewers’ development. Couldn’t young people be spending their time more usefully, working on the challenges related to their placement, and making progress towards their individual developmental goals?

Arguments to justify television usage are often based on children’s needs to relax, escape from reality, and be entertained. Indeed, after a long day of work, many of

us enjoy putting our feet up and spending the evening staring at that screen which serves as the central focus point in many households throughout South Africa. However, it is not the use of television itself which poses the problem, but rather the unplanned, non-purposeful use of television, which at times is based more on child and youth care workers’ need for a rest or peace and quiet, rather than what is in the best interests of a particular child or group. I would like to suggest that television-viewing which is not carefully managed can work against the therapeutic team, by promoting anti-social values and portraying disturbing images of violence and horror.

For many years, researchers and members of the public have voiced concern that television programs influence viewers’ behaviour. Statistics indicate that most children see thousands of violent scenes on their televisions before they have even left primary school. The hero of most action films and many programmes is a gun-toting, macho man who swears rather a lot. Viewers can rest assured that by the end of the program, he will have killed off all of the “baddies” using a range of diverse methods, including shooting, burning, stabbing, pushing off a high building and other forms of termination. Some years ago, the murder of three-year-old Jamie Bulger by two ten-year-olds in Britain was connected to one of the boys watching horror films, and more recently, the killing of a teenager started a debate about the influence of violent video games.

There are those who rush to the defence of television and video games saying such things cannot influence people’s behaviour. Why then do companies spend millions every year on television advertising? Is it not that they know that people are influenced by what they see and hear consistently? This is *not* to suggest that there is a direct causal relationship in the sense of “Joe sees an

advert for a new type of chocolate bar. He immediately thinks 'I must go and buy that chocolate bar'. Joe rushes to the shop immediately to buy the chocolate bar." No! The influence on behaviour is more subtle than this and advertisers know that even bad advertising is good for business. Most of us can remember the really annoying adverts, as much as we remember the ones which appeal to us. In child and youth care, we talk about imitation and role modelling as ways in which we teach behaviour to children and youth. Don't young people identify with television characters, have them as role models and imitate their behaviour?

Let us also remember that the cognitive abilities of children and youth, and particularly those at risk, are quite different to the abilities of adults. Young people are less able to be discerning and critical of what they view, and in early life are not able to distinguish between what is real and what is not. Of course, this is made even more difficult by the recent development of "Reality TV". Children and youth are not as able as adults to process information effectively, leaving them with the memory of disturbing images but no way to make sense of them. A two-year-old who walked into a room where her parents were watching a detective programme saw a scene where someone shot another person dead. The two-year-old repeated several times, with a puzzled look on her face, "He's sore. Naughty man." Such images may leave young people confused and frightened. Of course, this is why certain programmes come with age restrictions on them. In child and youth care, we might at times, not allow young people to watch certain programmes even when they are old enough, because chronological age is often not the same as developmental age - young people at risk are *more* vulnerable and therefore, often require more protection.

So, how can television be used appropriately in work with children and youth at risk? Here are a few thoughts...

- Watch television *with* children. This will enable you to monitor what is being watched and to monitor stimulation levels. It also provides you with the opportunity to lend support when necessary, and to engage in discussion about the programs and the characters. (E.g. "What did you think about Sipo when he lied to his girlfriend?")
- Set clear expectations about television viewing so that young people know how much and how often they may watch.
- Encourage children and youth to engage in more active pursuits.
- At the beginning of each week, engage the group in a discussion about what programs they want to watch, and facilitate a decision-making process in which the diverse needs and interests of all individuals are respected. Remember the importance of cultural and linguistic appropriateness.
- Learn to identify the underlying values being promoted or demonstrated in the program. Are these

values in keeping with child and youth care and our programme?

- Teach young people to be critical about media and to discuss the behaviour/choices of people in programs.
- Remember the principle of normalisation. Most people watch television, and shared knowledge about programs provides common topics about which young people can talk with peers.
- Remind young people that television is often very different to reality. Contrary to what we might believe from what we see on our screens, most people are not tall, thin and beautiful.
- Encourage young people to watch programs which present positive role models with whom they can identify. ▲

Child and Youth Care Practitioner Sandringham, Johannesburg

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Days to Remember

November

- 6 National Children's Day (1st Saturday of November)
- 6 International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment
- 8-14 International Week for Science and Peace
- 8 SADC Malaria Day
- 10 World Science Day for Peace and Development (UNESCO)
- 11-30 Skin Cancer Awareness Campaign
- 14 World Diabetes Day
- 16 International Day of Tolerance (UNESCO)
- 17-24 International Restorative Justice Week
- 19 World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
- 20 Universal Children's Day
- 25 International Day of No Violence Against Women

Dikwankwetla – Children in Action



“We would like you to send out more messages to people to teach them about children’s rights. Children and parents both need to understand their duties, rights and responsibilities. They should talk more about rights in the media, especially in schools and communities because some parents and teachers are ignorant, they think that children are given power to overpower them, they don’t really understand children’s rights.”