

Caring Schools Project



A multi-year action-research project to facilitate an expanded role for school as nodes of care and support to vulnerable children

This project has developed and tested an appreciative rights-based capacity-building approach to support vulnerable children in the context of poverty and the AIDS pandemic. This was done in partnership with the South African Democratic Teachers' Union, provincial education departments, the Catholic Institute of Education, Save the Children UK, the Little Elephant Training Centre for Early Education and Class Act Educational Services.

Collaboration continued with other organisations working in and through schools to strengthen care and support. In 2010, the project mainly focused on advocacy, and on how the action-research findings can inform and enrich what is already being done for children's rights by many different champions who support child well-being. The Caring Schools Network (CASNET) and STOP AIDS NOW! partnership in particular has been a key platform for sharing ideas and strengthening the work to support child well-being.

A booklet¹² on the implementation of the capacity-building approach (originally published in English in collaboration with the Catholic Institute of Education) was printed in French in 2010 for use in Francophone countries in Africa. The English version, together with the *South African Child Gauge 2008/2009* (which focuses on meaningful access to basic education), are used by the KwaZulu-Natal chapter of CASNET for capacity-building.

The last phase involves the publication of revised capacity-building resources, based on the testing of the pilot version of the *Champions for Children Handbook: How to build a caring school community*. As several organisations have published materials on this subject, the aim is to produce resources that will add value rather than duplicate what is already available.

The leading role that the Children's Institute has taken in pioneering what the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is promoting as 'Care and Support for Teaching and Learning' (CSTL) to mainstream care and support in the education sector has led to a further development. In mid-2010, the Institute was contracted by MIET Africa on behalf of SADC to do a policy review and develop a policy framework and guidelines for CSTL (see p. 35). This was an excellent opportunity to take forward lessons from the project, and to determine what materials would be most useful, and how best to focus them.

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