

Qhamani Educare and Nomsa Manxiwq Nquza' story
Submission on the Children's Bill: Early Childhood Development

My name is Nomsa, but I'm also known as Nokhaya. My surname is Manxiwa Nqeza. I am the principal of Qhamani educare in Brown's Farm, Philippi where I live.

Qhamani Educare centre is situated in middle west side of Philippi village 4a. I started the centre on 15 January 1996 with 40 children and four volunteers, but now we have got 82 children and 5 volunteers, one cook, two teachers one teacher's aid and me, the principal. We have got a committee; which we elected from the parents. They help us to fundraise. Because the staff are not paid on salaries, we depend on parents fees. So the committee raises the funds to improve our structure.

Philippi is most populated with poverty, crime and alcoholism. Most parents are not working, and some are students. So they have no one to look after their babies without us. So we also provide a meal for the children while the parents and the mothers are at work. Some of the children are staying with their grandmothers, because there other mommies have passed away or disappeared. So the grandchildren are staying with them. We also talk with the grandmothers to say that if they don't have money, they must still bring the children so that they can be safe.

The school fees are for babies nought to one year, its R80 per month. One year to two and a half, R70 per month for babies that still put a nappy on. From two and a half to six years, 50 rand per month. We charge R30 registration fee for the whole year. Its hard to say the exact number for how many pay, Sometimes my fees book is up and down, and sometimes half the babies they cant pay.

I do this because I want to give help in my community, also to protect children from the abuse. There is a high rate of abuse in this area. When they can't go to crèche, they can get abused from the people around the area and they can also have accidents because nobody looks after them when their parents go to work and to school. So I saw it was good to open the educare in my area. I also want to educate the children, to make them ready before they go to school.

I want to talk about registration, especially the department of social services. They are supposed to be helping us before anything else, before the fundraising. But their registration is too slow. They need so many things before they take us to the registration. They take time to do that. I think if they can make a better plan than they do now, it will be fine for us and the children too. Even now we don't have groceries to cook for the children, because of their registration problem. Last year we filled the forms and we received the certificate last year late. So we thought early this year we're supposed to get the funding for the children, maybe in April or May. But until now we didn't hear anything.

And department of health that's supposed to give us money for buying food. They just left us without telling us what happened. They say that they not going to give money for children. They said to us they are going to support the clinics. They're giving to the HIV children. But the children are not staying in the clinics. So I think they're wrong. Because the HIV children

are here with us, they must live with the other children. I have a clinic next to me, and I don't see the children in the clinic. There's no food, there's no nothing for the children there.

I do grade R too. The problem with the department of education is this. They've got quick registration. Registration from them is no problem. But they've got other problems. They give money quarterly. What they think of this. This money is to pay the teachers, to buy equipment, is buying food for the children. So we've got a problem about this. The educators are dying for that. They need money. Not quarterly, monthly. They didn't even make that quarter payment. They give the money after two quarters. Even me, last year I couldn't get the money for the centre in December. They gave me the money May this year. That was for the last quarter last year and the first quarter this year. I was going to them, and the teachers are cross and look at me like I've got their money. The education is bad. They must write down a letter to say we didn't receive anything, because it is bad for the trust of the teachers.

Even that money, the R3 per day per child is nothing. So I think the department of education must increase their money. And also the problem, they take only 30 children at school, and we've got more than that at schools. Even if we have 60 children, they don't care, they only pay subsidies for 30 children.

So there is something else that I want to tell the department of education. The department of education is supposed to provide for us. They've got these prefabs. They're supposed to help us to give us material to build a classroom. Today it was raining, and we've got leaks all over the building. If they can give us a prefab for the grade R children, that would be great for us. And put a ceiling on and the children will be dry and warm. The department of education must come and do something for us. They must come and evaluate us and do something for us. If they can do that it would be fine for the children, not for us, for the sake of the children.

At the moment we have lots of those prefabs in Philippi. They are building a new school. After they finished building the school, where are they going to take that? They can give it to us, without us having to make the noise. They must come to our schools. They don't know what we need. They never come to us. They are always in their office. The one sends you to the other one, to another one. Until you get bored and tired, you come home without a solution.

I know it sounds like I'm talking about Qhamani only. But we're all in the same position. I also want to mention I'm involved with the other people. I'm also a founder member of safety unity crèche forum, a group of ten crèches in ward 35. This forum is playing a key role in improving the standard of management, care and education amongst its members. I'm also elected as a committee of Ithemba Labantwana. So Ithemba Labantwana is a network of 270 community crèches. I'm also a member of Ndzondelela forum. This forum is also a forum that we formed after our social workers divide our area, Philippi area, in two. So we've got two social workers here, so we've got this forum. I'm also president of power of god gospel group.

It's the same for everybody. This is especially when the other crèches are not getting anything from department of education, department of social services. Nothing, nothing. The people are looking after the schools, and do the fundraising. The other organisations don't have money to give donations to the people. So it takes time. Every three or four years, you need to take time. I opened the crèche 1996, I think I receive a donation once in 2000 from the city

council. It was R3000. It was my first and last donation up until now. Until we got money from the lottery now. So you can't say we can get something quick from now.

I don't know. If government can come and see how we work very hard and the parents trust us. If they left their children and they trust us that we are going to do better things for the children, give them food and love. We've got love and I know that. We've got the love for the children and our communities and our country. Because you know, we're not doing this to be a star of South Africa or of Philippi. We're doing this because we want those children to be a star of South Africa. To grow us with something that is going to be there for the future. I also say to them today; you know what. In twenty years time, you're going to help me if I'm sick and you're a doctor. That's what I want. Not to have the children at the robots asking for something and staying under the bridge. I want them to get a better future from the education. You can get a better future with this education. That's why we need this help.

What do I want government to do for us? I want government to recognise our work. It's like they don't recognise that our work is something important in the world.

And I want the department of education and the department of social development to understand what we are doing. Then they can come and make registration better, and pay the subsidies properly. They will pay us on time. They will work together so there is not always paperwork here and meetings there and everything takes too long. They will support us to educate and look after the children.