

**SIYAKHANA YOUTH OUTREACH
AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMME – MT FRERE CENTRE**
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Siyakhana Youth Outreach and Education Programme – Mt Frere Centre is an organisation that serves children living and working on the streets and mostly vulnerable children and youth at risk, encouraging a holistic and developmental approach in dealing with the child thus engaging the context of the child. This entails contributing to ensure a high level of protection of physical and mental health by the protection of children through early intervention and the prevention programmes. Through sustainable networks that are created with all stakeholders Siyakhana had build a multidisciplinary network team. As Siyakhana work with communities that have more than half of the population of Alfred Nzo District Municipality are adults that are unemployed and those that are employed are earning below the subsistence wage and they live on selling on the streets with their children. In these settings children are the victims of the circumstances and would work hard or live on difficult situation for survival. To address these challenge that children are facing as an organisation, we conduct public awareness campaigns sensitising communities at large about the prevailing problem affecting children and offer holistic range of supportive services to children, youth at risk, and among this category also are children heading families. Having done the baseline survey and gathered information of how children's live are, Siyakhana had done what was able to be done, due to financial constraints we are unable to do well to address the mentioned challenges.

Our submission on the Draft Children's Amendment Bill Section 76 is about Shelters and Drop-in Centres and we say that;

- *Shelters should be reclassified as specialized CYC centers with specialized programs for children from the street?*
- *Voluntary admission and self-referral of children living and working on the streets will be accommodated*
- *Drop-in Centers should be as add on services/partial care/early intervention*
- *Costing of care, early intervention and prevention programmes for rehabilitation of children living and working on the street are programmes that require funding – programme funding vs. per capita allocation*

What happens in practice

It really bothers us, as the community of Alfred Nzo District Municipality, for not being considered as a CYC Centre whereas Children on the streets need all the services offered in the CYC Centre as a provision and a right

Shelters should be incorporated in to Chapter 13, as a specialist child and youth care centers, offering dedicated services and early intervention and prevention programmes for children living and working on the streets in terms of section 191(3) © of the Bill, and drop-in centers should be included as an add on service provided by child and youth care centers. Changing the definition of shelters would facilitate this without the need for the changes in the principle Act. Children on the streets are children in need of care and protection and are extremely vulnerable. They are entitled to the same standards of care and protection as other children, for an example, Education. Chapter 14 fails to make provision for all the prevention and early intervention for children living and working on the streets.

. As mentioned above this can only be achieved through incorporation of shelters and drop in centers into chapter 13. Unlike child and youth care centers, Drop – in Centers are treated unfairly as far as funding is concerned. Chapter 14 does not provide for strategies to ensure sufficient spread of drop in centers and the proper functioning. Section 194 in chapter 13 obliges the MEC for

Social Development to establish and operate child and youth care centers for those provinces with money appropriate by the relevant provincial legislature

We strongly say that the Bill as it stands does not make any provision for children living and working on the streets in rural areas. This is show-cased by the increased numbers of children working on the streets schooling and not schooling. These children are helping their families to make the ends meet. The Bill is unclear about the provision of emergency overnight accommodation as some Drop – in centers are forced to provide this service as there is nowhere else for the children to sleep in an emergency. The centers are not adequately equipped to do so nor are the staff enough to provide residential care; therefore children are not adequately protected. It is recommended that overnight emergency facilities need to be included in chapter 14 and that those facilities would be added to drop in centers in rural areas.

Aftercare service should therefore be provided as prevention and early intervention services as in chapter 8 and in an outreach programme in the drop-in centers. This focus on family counselling and integration of the child with the family \ community aiming at building support for families and children within community networks. It is important to create support networks for children at risk of becoming street children, especially through friends and siblings of children who were once street children.

We would like to present a case study that would show case challenges that are impacting to children's lives.

CASE STUDY

Lizo 13 year old boy with his two siblings, one 10 years and the other one 3 years, were forced to live in a caravan on their own, while their

mother was serving a 3 year sentence of selling drugs (dagga) on the streets here in Mt Frere. They were in and out of school because they were facing a challenge of raising something to eat and so were forced to work on the streets. Relief assistance in a form of food parcels from the Department of Social Development and other sources were given to these children, but peer pressure in terms of them not having parental guidance, influenced others to come and share their place and were a group that abuse substance and they were hard to be removed from the streets. A number of children working on the streets then increased and up until now we are bailing to fight the scourge since some of them have skipped many years of schooling and are full time street workers.

Recommendation:

However, it is not clear what the Department of Social Development caters for the Drop-in centers as compared to the services they render as we know that services offered to street children in small towns and rural settings are in a Drop in centre, this is a base from which a comprehensive range of services develops over time. For this reason it is recommended that the Bill must ensure that there is an adequate spread of Drop in centers in each rural towns. When planning the range of services the MEC must give effect to the objective of the Act and the general principles ensuring that services provided cater for all children

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