



## COMMENT



## FREEING ALL WOMEN AND CHILDREN

SELLO MOKOENA

SINCE the dawn of the democratic dispensation successive governments introduced progressive policies. Among others, these were aimed at protecting women and children against abuse.

These saw the emergence of men's grassroots movements pressing for positive social changes which bring together young and old male role models in a bid to promote inter-generational values in order to fight the scourge of abuse and to change attitudes towards women and the way women and girls are perceived in most patriarchal societies.

Organised by the Gauteng Department of Social Development and the Men's Forum, this year's South African Men of the Year Awards are set to honour positive male role models of all ages who stand up against rampant incidents of abuse and for their distinctive leadership roles in various categories at a ceremony to be held on November 29. Previous winners include advocate George Bizos, Dr Richard Maponya and Dr Andrew Mlangeni.

Arguably, this initiative is one of the many spin-offs of the democratic government's efforts, which spent the early years of its existence developing and implementing progressive policies to fight rampant cases of women and child abuse.

To me the initiative plays a crucial role in society in the sense that it is an attempt to create an inclusive structure which uses a bottom-up approach that avoids a top-down approach that only superficially engages the stakeholders.

It creates an inclusive environment that embraces stakeholders from various quarters, despite different cultural and religious backgrounds, as well as racial identity including countries of origin.

This is critical as evidence-based research shows that in cases where a top-down approach had been implemented, critical stakeholders did not develop a sense of partnership, and sustainable commitment essential for achieving groundbreaking changes.

In the words of Gauteng MEC for Social Development Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, the successful implementation of a societal plan of action to eradicate abuse hinges on:

- Strengthening of moral regeneration programmes and the establishment of moral regeneration chapters throughout the country.
- The establishment of community dialogues and round tables, the objectives of which would be to engage in a process of joint problem solving that taps into the creativity and resources of all stakeholders. The objective is to develop a common vision for the future and to engage in a search for workable solutions and the best practical approaches in dealing with the scourge.

- Conducting regular door-to-door and media campaigns and actively encouraging communities and leaders from all walks of life to protect vulnerable groups, among others.

Clearly, this calls for urgent interventions that entail a developmental approach aimed at both the perpetrator and the abused person. Without creating a set of conditions conducive to ensuring that both the victims and the perpetrators are healed, we will not successfully deal with the scourge of abuse. In an effort to clamp down on the scourge of abuse we need to take practical measures imbued with a revolutionary spirit or a new culture of activism that is rooted in communities.

As the late president Nelson Mandela said in his inauguration speech, "no one is free until every woman in this country is truly free".

Mokoena is director of research and policy at the Gauteng Department of Social Development and writes in his personal capacity

We were all children once. And we all share the desire for the well-being of our children, which has always been and will continue to be the most universally cherished aspiration of humankind.

KOFI ANNAN

Ghanaian diplomat who served as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations



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## PUPILS, TEACHER FREED

CAMEROON'S military has freed nine children and their teacher who had been kidnapped by gunmen on Tuesday from a school in Kumba in the country's restive English-speaking South West region, a military official said on Wednesday.

## CHILDREN

## Crisis in human development

750 million children and youth are underfed, semi-literate or illiterate, jobless or underemployed in Africa

EDWIN NAIDU

AFRICA is sitting on a time-bomb with an estimated 750 million children and young people undernourished, semi-literate or illiterate, jobless or underemployed, sparking fears of a human development crisis.

This would have dire consequences for the continent unless African governments act urgently, the Addis Ababa-based African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) warned on World Children's Day on Tuesday.

In a report, the forum said the persistently high levels of stunting and child malnutrition; the consequences of substandard education that many of Africa's children are receiving; and the underutilisation of a youth population growing at a rapid and unprecedented rate would lead to a crisis if unchecked.

In addition, the poverty rate in 20 African countries was above 40% and children in such countries were locked into a vicious cycle of inter-generational poverty that could only be broken by pro-poor budgets.

Poor education was another serious challenge. Africa's child population has increased five-fold since 1950 and the UN Children's Fund has forecast it would be 750 million by 2030. By the middle of the century, it was expected to reach 1 billion, representing about 40% of the world's child population.

This requires that governments act swiftly to invest in the child and youth population.

While there have been remarkable achievements in improving the well-being of children across Africa, the comprehensive ACPF review of the continent in its report, *The African Report on Child Wellbeing 2018: Progress in the child-friendliness of African governments*, set off alarm bells of an unfolding human development crisis, said Graça Machel, chairperson of the International Board of Trustees of the African Child Policy Forum.

"At ACPF, we are very concerned with the above issues. We find it unacceptable that 30% of African children are suffering from stunting. In some countries, more than half of children under five years of age are stunted," she said.

"It is equally unconscionable that nine out of 10 pupils in primary schools will not have the required skills, knowledge and competencies they are expected to have when they complete this basic stage of education.

"It is disconcerting that despite



NINE out of 10 pupils in primary schools, such those at this one in Johannesburg, will not have the skills, knowledge and competencies they are expected to have when they complete this stage of education. | DENIS FARRELI AP

knowledge of this reality, we are not investing enough in the children of this continent. This is a toxic combination that does not augur well for Africa's future."

Children came under the spotlight in another report, *Caught in the Crossfire: An International Survey Of Anti-terrorism Legislation And Its Impact On Children*, released by global children's rights advocacy body Child Rights International Network (Crin).

It said children were routinely detained without charges for long periods under counter-terrorism powers in many countries. Since 2001, according to Crin, atrocities by non-state groups had increased, especially in developing countries in the Middle East, central Asia and central and eastern Africa.

In 2018, 11 000 attacks killed more than 25 000 people, many of them children. As of 2018, children were being used extensively, including by Islamist groups in developing countries such as Islamic State, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab.

The ACPF report said violence against children was widespread across Africa in homes, schools, communities, workplaces and care and justice systems. Girls, for example, have a higher risk of being trafficked and exposed to harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Machel added that Africa could not achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda for 2063 without sustained commitment to long-term investment in quality education, healthcare and nutrition. This required dedicating the necessary resources to create employment opportunities for the youth.

"Every boy and girl need to be given a fair and equal chance to develop to their full potential. This should be the premise of all laws, policies and programmes targeting children.

"We see from this report that is not the case now. There are groups that are continuously marginalised and are not

benefiting from public services. This is not acceptable. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that no child is left behind," Machel said.

According to the report, the most child-friendly governments on the continent are Mauritius, Algeria, Tunisia, South Africa, Cape Verde, Egypt, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, Morocco and Lesotho.

The "least child-friendly" governments at the bottom of the 2018 table are South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, Cameroon, Zambia, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea and Eritrea.

The legal and policy frameworks and enforcement mechanisms in most of these countries were inadequate and weak. They also invested the least in education, health and well-being.

Alarmingly, statistics from Save the Children International indicated that 37% of all out-of-school children in the world are from Africa – a 13% rise since 2000.

The World Policy Analysis Centre

found that children with disabilities remained among the most excluded from education.

Every African government has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and most have also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

But the ratification of international and regional instruments does not automatically prove there is commitment, and unless accompanied by political will and actions by governments it will not translate into reality, the report said.

For example, nearly 30 years after most African governments ratified both the convention and the charter, African girls were still not treated equally in law. The report concludes with the alarming message that Africa is on the verge of a serious human development crisis.

There will be grave consequences for its people and the future of the continent – unless governments take action urgently.

## POVERTY

## We need to revisit the term 'developmental state'

JACOB MAMABOLO

ONE of the critical challenges our country has faced since its transition to democracy in 1994 is that we have not managed to translate the ethos of our globally celebrated, progressive constitution into practical and meaningful change for the majority of our people.

Put differently, after 20 years of democracy, the aspirations of our constitutional democracy remain trapped in intention. It is becoming very apparent that the lofty ideals embedded in our constitution must still reflect in positive daily living experiences and a better quality of life for the millions of our citizens who remain ensnared in poverty, burdened by extreme inequality and hobbled by lack of opportunity.

For us to resolve this paradox of our constitutional democracy, we must focus on the nuts and bolts of the developmental state. In my view, the solution lies in how we define a developmental state and how we attain and apply it to our country's unique conditions.

It is only by confronting this question in a rigorously scientific and scholarly way that we will bridge the yawning gap between the ideals of our constitutional democracy and the day-to-day realities of the majority of our people.

The National Development Plan (NDP) frames this challenge as a call to build a "capable and developmental



GAUTENG MEC for Infrastructure Development Jacob Mamabolo says we need to align South Africa's functioning with the goals of the constitution. | NOKUTHULA MBATHA

state". The NDP refers to "capable" and "developmental" as two separate concepts, and herein, I believe, might lie the nub of the paradox.

A developmental state must be both capable and efficient, otherwise it will be ill-equipped to achieve its developmental objectives. A developmental state that is inefficient, wasteful and corrupt would lose its meaning and popular appeal for the citizens of South Africa and those who admire our

constitutional democracy.

An incapable developmental state would reflect the characteristics of the many bureaucratic, repressive, backward and moribund countries we see across the world.

In the South African context, a state without the necessary capability, ability and efficiency will not be able to meet the unique requirements of our democracy. It would be unable to drive our profound and historic com-

mitment to non-racialism, it would be unable to eradicate the demons of tribalism and regionalism and it would be incapable of containing dangerous populism that risks turning our country into a failed state.

Considering the high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality combined with the marginalisation and exclusion that large parts of our population feel, it is only a capable and competent state that will be able to counter increased racial polarisation, tribalism and degenerate levels of violence and crime.

The role of the democratic state to lead and co-ordinate all forces in society to turn around the economic fortunes of our country takes on even more urgency when we consider South Africa's low industrial base.

We can no longer ignore the need to interrogate the nuts and bolts of the developmental state. We must place the following question centre stage: how should the technical functioning and day-to-day operations of the developmental state be configured to meet the legitimate needs and expectations of our people for a better quality of life?

Only by resolving this question will we be able to evolve a model for a capable, efficient, active developmental state explicitly suited to our unique South African conditions.

The NDP acknowledged two examples of highly competent and efficient state organs – Sars and the Department

of Home Affairs. Our enquiry should understand the technical factors and levers that made these two models successful, while also coming to grips with what underlies their apparent collapse.

Because we have never had sufficient debate or consensus on what constitutes an effective and efficient state, we have also not been able to defend entities like Sars against erosion, collapse and hollowing-out. Without a blueprint of what made them efficient in the first place, we are also unable to replicate their successes elsewhere in government.

It is only by defining the nuts and bolts of a capable developmental state that we will come up with a replicable state-efficiency model that will enable us to reconfigure state organs so that we can align the aspirations of our people with the values of the constitution and reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Only through a capable developmental state will we realise the ideals of building a non-racial society that is free of tribalism, crime, violence, corruption, looting and all the other looming risks that threaten our constitutional democracy. We must come up with a concrete model for a technically efficient, strategically capable and ethically sound developmental state as a matter of extreme urgency.

Mamabolo, MEC, Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development