

## CHILD RIGHTS GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

### THE GOVERNMENT OF SWAZILAND PRIORITISE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS A case study on advocacy by Save the Children based on Concluding Observations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child April 2011



Photo: Elizabeth Kgololo

*"If children are regarded as the country's greatest assets parents, traditional leaders, government officials and law makers should take an active role in contributing towards enjoyment of children's rights."*

(Emmanuel Ndlangamandla,  
Director of the Coordinating  
Assembly of Non Governmental  
Organisations)

#### BACKGROUND

Swaziland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child examined Swaziland's first report to the Committee in 2006 with input from amongst others Save the Children. In its Concluding Observations, the Committee made 36 recommendations on issues to be addressed to fulfill all rights for all children in Swaziland. Save the Children, together with UNICEF and other child focused organisations, has used the 36 recommendations to advocate for increased political commitment to and improvement of children's rights in Swaziland.

#### WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN DID

**Invited a member of the UN Committee to Swaziland:** In 2007 Save the Children invited Rosa Maria Ortiz, a member at the time of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, to Swaziland to raise awareness on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. She presented the Committee's Concluding Observations to Swaziland, including the 36 recommendations, and explained what steps the Government needs to take to implement these recommendations. Her visit triggered a number of actions by the Government and Parliament to enhance systems and structures for children's rights.

**Engaged with Government and Parliament:** Save the Children, together with UNICEF and civil society partners, has engaged different government structures to raise awareness on the Concluding Observations and supported the Government to implement the 36 recommendations. We used our membership in the technical working groups under the National Children's Coordination Unit to integrate the Concluding Observations into technical discussions and the development of strategic plans and policies. Save the Children and other members of the Children's Consortium have also made presentations to different Committees in Parliament and engaged with individual members of Parliament at constituency level.

**Mobilised civil society actors:** We facilitated closer collaboration between child focused organisations in Swaziland to ensure better coordination and joint action to promote and monitor children's rights often using the Concluding Observations.

**Appeared in the media:** We participated in radio shows and TV programmes to discuss the recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and to explain why they are important for Swazi children. We also ran a small advertisement campaign and featured in newspapers.

**Ensured that children's opinions were heard:** Save the Children produced a child-friendly version of the Concluding Observations with its 36 recommendations. Using the child-friendly material we trained 12 peer educators and eight young radio producers on the Concluding Observations. Equipped with knowledge on

children's rights and the recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, these children trained more than 200 children on the Concluding Observations and the young radio producers raised awareness on the topic in specific radio programmes reaching an audience of 200 000 persons.

## IMPACT

*"The Concluding Observations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has provided a common platform for civil society organisations to engage with the Government and advance children's rights. The Government has also used the recommendations from the Committee to strengthen different systems and structures to make children's rights a reality in Swaziland."*

Dumisani Mnisi, Director, Save the Children Swaziland

- The National Children's Coordination Unit in the Deputy Prime Minister's Office has been established improving coordination across government departments and with civil society actors on issues relating to children and their rights. Civil society also has opportunities to participate in the work of the National Children's Coordination Unit through technical working groups established by this Unit.
- A Portfolio Committee on Children has been established in Parliament to strengthen the focus on and coordination of parliamentary work on children within the Swazi Parliament.
- Members of Parliament have signed a pledge for children focusing on a selected number of the 36 recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations on Swaziland.
- A Human Rights Commission has been established in Swaziland with a mandate to independently promote and monitor human rights, including children's rights.
- The Child Protection and Welfare Bill has been approved by government and is at the moment discussed by Parliament. When passed into law it will provide comprehensive legal protection for children and address many of the outstanding Concluding Observations.
- The Government of Swaziland has adopted a National Children's Policy, which provides a comprehensive framework for services to Swazi children based on minimum standards.
- A civil society coalition for children's rights – the Children's Consortium – has been established and is now actively promoting and monitoring children's rights using the Concluding Observations.
- More than 200 children have been trained on the Concluding Observations with its 36 recommendations using a child-friendly version of the Concluding Observations. Children have also made inputs to the drafting of the Child Protection and Welfare Bill and the Children's Policy.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- The Concluding Observations, including the 36 recommendations, issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Swaziland have assisted Save the Children to mobilise civil society actors around children's rights and they have been an important tool to engage further with the Government and Parliament around children's rights.
- The visit of one of the members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to Swaziland was crucial in moving children's rights further up the political agenda in the country.
- Through an informed media adults and children in Swaziland gained access to useful information about children's rights based on the Concluding Observations.

## DO YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION

About the Child Rights Governance Initiative

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