

Childrens fund

Speech for Nelson Mandela annual lecture Held at the Walter Sisulu Square on the 12th July, 2008

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On the 9th July the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund hosted its first Regional Youth Parliament. Presentations by six countries including South Africa were made by children who have gathered for a period of two days to deliberate on the national issues that affect them and their peers. The gathering was a culmination of the national meetings in their respective countries where young people identified issues that affect them. The issues that children are raising are not different from adults issues it is how the impact on the lives of children and their ability to enjoy their childhood.

Each time there is conflict in a country, children are most affected - either as child soldiers or displaced people who then lose out on their schooling and general development. Most of the children do not get an opportunity to do what their counterparts are doing in developed countries such as engaging in creative and innovative programmes which allow them to develop skills in different spheres of their lives. The governments of Africa need to create an environment that is friendly to children and supportive to their initiatives to ensure that the democratic values are promoted for good leadership following in the foot steps of great leaders such as Mr Mandela, Mr Nkrumah, Mr Machel and our first female President with us here today, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

We, as the youth parliamentarians of Southern Africa, have chosen to take responsibility to speak for those who don't have the power to speak and those who can't be heard. We shall strive to bring unity, to build UBUNTU and the spirit of togetherness while we do all we can to build child friendly leadership with pride and understanding of an African child.

We stand proud today proving hopeless people wrong that we are not the lost generation. As you can see, we are the future leaders who see beyond what's visible. We want to see every child being exposed to opportunities that will enrich their lives. Our vision is for all children to not only understand and act upon their rights but to take responsibility for their own futures and reach the point where they see challenges as opportunities and stepping stones towards building character, enhancing leadership qualities and shaping their own future.

Imagine how unique and beautiful our country, region and continent would be!

Our Objectives are

- to build a child friendly leadership among the society we are living in
- to improve child participation at home, schools, and within the community, to built self image, self esteem, and self worth within civic participation.
- As **Nelson Mandela Children's Fund** legacy states: We want to change the way society treats its children and youth.
- To build a nation born of true love (built unity and humanity)
- To improve the structure of learning in schools in a way that learners can be taught the values or qualities of education and values of life so that the could understand and act upon them.
- To improve the teaching of cultural values (identity, customs, human consciousness, political & African consciousness)

How do we see ourselves doing this?

- By building a child friendly leadership, we recommend that our leaders should realize that every step they take affects a child. So having child participation in decision making will build relationship between child friendly leadership and child participation.
- By influencing society to change negative attitudes towards children and youth. They should interact with one another in order to find solutions (by coming together as a community, solving problems affecting both old and young people)
- By learning the values of life, educators, children, and parents should meet in a way that they bring the structures and come up with strategies of teaching young people about values of education, life and culture including (customs, identity, human development, human, political and African consciousness).