

**T**here is a huge threat hanging over non-profit organisations (NPOs) in South Africa. The South African government, through Cabinet, recently approved the 2023 General Intelligence Laws Amendment Bill. This is worrisome and the non-profit sector cannot ignore what the Bill proposes; introducing provisions into our law that will impact very harshly on civil society organisations including NPOs.

What the Amendment Bill does is to require compulsory vetting and examination by state security to determine if an NPO poses a threat to national security. Clearly this is to prevent the many organisations involved in advocacy work and brave enough to speak out, those that expose government corruption every day. But this is not an isolated occurrence. This is happening worldwide, as we see countries around the world clamping down with the harshest legislation on the non-profit sector.

The Bill proposes that the State Security Agency will have access to personal information of NPO staff, including financial records, personal relationships and any other information that it considers necessary to protect security. This is clearly unconstitutional, and an infringement on the rights of individuals and organisations.

We know that NPOs and civil society organisations are critical in a democratic dispensation. We hold government and public officials accountable and we expose their deviance. What has happened is that with civil society exposing all the corruption, theft and greed of politicians and of public officials, this became inevitable. The motivation for the Amendment Bill is clearly to intimidate civil society and the non-profit sector.

As the sector we have to stand together on this. We have come through decades of state repression and the banning of organisations and individuals; surely, we cannot go back to this.

Lindiwe Mazibuko, in a recent article in the Sunday Times, writes that this crackdown on NPOs and civil society will not improve national security. She says that "civil society organisations have played a pivotal role in opposing repression and promoting democracy and human rights in South Africa". Yes, she is 100% correct. It is civil society, through individuals such as Zackie Achmat and the many others that forced government to provide antiretroviral drugs during the height of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is also civil society organisations that have exposed the many hundreds of billions of rand in corruption over the past decade or two.

We hope that every ECD non-profit and civil society organisation will make their voice heard to the authorities and, if needs be, to the courts. If we do not do this loudly and actively, we will find that we are again silenced, much like the apartheid government silenced civil society organisations through banning orders, and by putting its leaders in prison.

We hope you enjoy this edition of EARLY YEARS.

ERIC ATMORE  
Director

**WE WILL  
NOT BE  
SILENCED**

## INNOVATIVE SCALED INTERVENTION HELPS IMPROVE QUALITY IN ECD

~ Riedewhaan Allie

### If you build the capacity of caregivers, they become the agents of change

In recent months many case studies and learning briefs used Concepts such as "innovation" and "scaling" to encourage creativity among social-purpose organisations to improve and broaden their services.

In the face of growing social degradation, rampant lawlessness, senseless killings of people on our streets, and young children getting caught up in the crossfire of gang and turf wars makes living in townships difficult for people.

As a result of what is happening on the streets, families and communities are increasingly becoming vulnerable and in need of support.

We have seen how quickly civil society can respond to emergencies when fires ravage informal settlements or tornadoes (wind spouts) rip through sections of communities and flatten homes and organisations rally to provide aid and support to attend to the crisis.

However, there are several challenges including increased gender-based violence, femicide, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, families not having access to food and millions of people going to bed hungry every night and literally being suffocated by their poverty and despair.

In the face of these compounded crises, social-purpose organisations seem to miss the opportunity or understanding of innovation and scaling. Innovation can be described as an organisational capability that enables an organisation to continuously transform knowledge and ideas into new products, processes and systems for the benefit of the organisation and its stakeholders - the communities we serve (Lawson & Samson, 2001).

Similarly, scaling is defined as increasing the impact a social-purpose organisation produces to match the magnitude of the social need or problem it seeks to address (Dees, 2008, Bloom & Smith, 2010).

It is evident that the social problems are just steamrolling forward, and social-purpose organisations must show that they can respond adequately

Our work in the early childhood development (ECD) sector can be daunting if we look at the following statistics:

- South Africa has about 7 million children aged 0 - 5 years.

- About 3 million children participate in some form of ECD programme.
- However, only about 14340 preschools are registered facilities.
- Nearly 4 million children under 5 are beneficiaries of Child Support Grants.

Simple logic will indicate that all beneficiaries of Child Support Grants (CSGs) should automatically benefit from a government ECD subsidy and qualify to have access to an ECD programme operating as close to their homes as possible.

The statistics clearly indicate this is not the case. Local and international research on the benefits of providing ECD services to young children can serve as a poverty reduction strategy for governments who invest adequately in their young children's development.

On the other hand children who have access and participate in ECD programmes will do better at school and have a better trajectory in life as shown in studies conducted by UNICEF and the World Bank.

However, nothing is simple, and children can only benefit from a subsidy if they attend a registered facility that complies with a string of compliances and norms and standards.

The low numbers above indicate that it is far too challenging for those operating preschools to become compliant. Thus, the majority of children in poor quintile 1 communities find themselves in unregistered facilities that cannot access government support and their families have to balance spending the little money they have on fees or food.

With this context in mind the Foundation for Community Work as a staunch ECD organisation that has 36 preschools affiliated under its umbrella by 1990 and assisted communities to buy land and build preschools to address the development needs of young children, took the bold step to stop investing in brick-and-mortar and instead to take a different approach to invest in the development of people's capacities as a community development strategy.



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The preschool community and affiliates were not impressed with this paradigm shift (Fredericks, 2005), who considered having preschools as the yardstick to measure against wealthier communities.

The organisation realised that the communities did not have the capacity to generate enough money and income to make their facilities self-sufficient and therefore were not sustainable (WC FCW Minute, 1979).

The dominant preschool model was always facility-based and market-driven - preschools offer services and parents pay for their children to benefit from the service being offered.

In poor communities with growing poverty and unemployment this model was always geared towards those who could afford the services.

The emergence of the Family in Focus programme as an ECD organisational change strategy became more prominent in the period 1990 - 2000.

The search for a variety of cost-effective childcare programmes to increase access, and to improve the quality of care and nurturing of young children with greater input from parents and caregivers, has been an ongoing one.



For the past 15 years the organisation steadily worked towards refining the Family in Focus (FIF) home-visiting programme as a credible ECD intervention strategy. The organisation's theory of change is premised on the fact that if you build the capacity of caregivers, they become the agents of change for their children.

The process involves partnerships with communities through MOUs, identifying and training local women as home visitors to support caregivers with young children by taking learning support directly into homes and at the same time offer support to mothers as well as making homes and streets safer for young children.

Currently organisation has managed to achieve a realistic degree of scale and the FIF program operates in five districts and 17 communities across the Western Cape and provides employment opportunities for at least 250 home visitors -

mostly women who earn a stipend that helps their families to put food on the table.

Through this innovative and scaled intervention, the organisation managed to scale "wide", reaching more than 10,000 caregivers and families each year, and "deep" improving the quality of the ECD home visiting programme with at least 11,000 young preschool aged children receiving ECD support in their homes and caregivers assisting with daily homework activities and demonstrating that mothers are the first and best teachers of their children.

The partnership with local communities and establishing registered community-based organisations becomes the anchor of the FIF programme and ensures that local communities take ownership of the intervention.

*Dr Allie is Foundation for Community Work director in Athlone.*

Article first published in the Cape Times  
in September 2023.

## SOUTH AFRICA MAKING PROGRESS TOWARDS EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT GOALS, EDUCATION OFFICIALS SAY

~ Msindisi Fengu

Working Ahead of a possible tabling of the new Bela Bill in Parliament after the 2024 elections, the Department of Basic Education says it is 'delivering its ECD priorities and social justice principles'.



"Get a swing for children" is what Gauteng education authorities told Abigail Gavin, centre manager at Little Learners Creche in Roodepoort, Johannesburg, earlier this month.

Gavin's creche is housed in a five-room house and is among the 98% "functional" early childhood development (ECD) centres

listed on the Department of Basic Education (DBE) database compiled during the national census in 2021. In total, 42 420 ECD centres were recorded.

Gavin told Daily Maverick that the officials were on site on 4 August to monitor conditions at the creche as part of the government's efforts to integrate ECD centres – specifically their Grade R pupils – into the public education system.

Hers was registered with the provincial education department in 2021. It caters for 45 children, but only 32 are enrolled for grades R and RR combined.

Gavin's employees include three teachers, a cook and a gardener.

"They were satisfied with what we have but recommended that we get a swing. They even checked our menu and what we were cooking. We also display our menu at the front for parents to see," Gavin said.

### Bela Bill

The move to integrate ECD centres forms part of the [Basic Education Laws Amendment Act](#) (Bela).



The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education deliberated on the Bela draft report last week. One of the report's recommendations was that Grade R should be compulsory in public schools.

According to another report tabled by DBE officials before the committee on 6 June, President Cyril Ramaphosa issued a proclamation in 2022 for Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga to take over responsibilities spelled out in two chapters of the Children's Act from the Department of Social Development. They are: Chapter 5 dealing with partial-care facilities, their registration and funding; and Chapter 6 defining what ECD programmes should entail.

Officials said at the time that there were separate norms and standards for both chapters, which applied to centre-based ECD provisions. "The Children's Act is not suited to support the service delivery model of the basic education sector," the report read, stating that the act was created with Social

Development's role in mind and was undermining progress made towards the DBE's priorities for access to ECDs.

The report said the short-term legislative reform for ECD was needed to address the defects of the act to enable the DBE to make faster progress towards its ECD goals.



A redrafted Children's Amendment Bill has been completed after the previous one was found to be not fit for purpose, and the Office of the Chief State Law Adviser has recommended that public consultation for it be repeated. The next stage, the report stated, was Motshekga's approval for gazetting it for public comment.

It would be possible for the new bill to be tabled in Parliament after next year's general elections and for it to be enacted in 2025.

In the meantime, the report said the DBE was delivering its ECD priorities and social justice principles through the 2023 amendment bill by streamlining registration and funding systems into the regulations to ensure poor children benefit. Other achieved interventions included eliminating wasteful and duplicative processes

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