

I recently read a piece called “Lessons learned in my first 80 years” by the late Byron Wien, an American investor and vice chairman of Blackstone Advisory Partners. What interested me was to learn from the lessons of an older person and see how these could be used in leading a non-profit organisation. Some of the lessons that he learned in his first 80 years and which he practiced into his 90s, is the following:

Concentrate on finding a big idea that will make an impact on the people you want to influence.

Network intensely.

Read all the time.

Travel extensively.

Become comfortable with who you are.

Give those who work for you a pat on the back when they do good work.

Write hand-written notes to your colleagues, and not e-mail.

Think of ways that you can do your job better.

The hard way is always the right way.

Don't try to be better than your competitors, try to be different.

Take the job that looks like it will be the most enjoyable.

The goal of life is to be a happy person and the right job is essential to that.

Always find someone younger to mentor.

Every year try doing something you have never done before that is totally out of your comfort zone.

Never retire.

These are wise words that we should all consider as we lead our organisations.

Enjoy this edition of EARLY YEARS.

ERIC ATMORE
Director

REVIEW OF SA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICY PAVES WAY AHEAD

~ Genesis Analytics

In collaboration with UNICEF, Genesis conducted a comprehensive evaluation of South Africa's National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) Policy to assess the progress and effectiveness of its implementation since the policy was introduced in 2015.



The evaluation examined the successes and challenges in achieving the policy's objectives in the short, medium and long term, as well as its influence on the planning, delivery and regulation of ECD services at various levels of government. The assessment involved wide-ranging consultations with stakeholders across the sector, a review of the national policy framework and a literature review to produce a comprehensive sectoral assessment for ECD. The study identified key learnings and insights from eight years of policy implementation.

Introduced in 2015, South Africa's NIECD policy aimed to establish a comprehensive framework for providing quality ECD services to all children in the country. Recognising the critical role of ECD in shaping children's potential, the policy set out a holistic set of sectoral targets and outlined the commitments from the state that would be required to achieve them.

In the years after the policy's implementation, the South African government achieved significant progress, including near-universalisation of birth registration and a strong social protection system that includes one of the largest cash transfer programmes in Africa and globally. Despite progress, gaps remain within the policy and implementation, which the government is committed to addressing.

The evaluation served to bring together insights across sectors that may face coordination challenges such as assessing social protection measures, operational bottlenecks in accessing critical services, and mapping human resource requirements.

The evaluation clarified roles and responsibilities by distinguishing between those of government and those covered by the private sector and NGOs. This culminated in a presentation of perspectives from both sides, as well as a way forward to standardise fragmented efforts under a national framework.

The study provided valuable recommendations for policy amendments and improvements, particularly in light of the recent shift of ECD responsibilities from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education. These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the NIECD policy, ensuring that every child in South Africa has access to comprehensive, quality ECD services that lay the foundation for their optimal development and future success.

The full report can be found online here:

<https://shorturl.at/ipCX7>

Article first published and is available at:

www.genesis-analytics.com/projects/review-of-sas-early-childhood-development-policy-paves-way-ahead

ELECTIONS 2024: A PARTY FOR THE CHILDREN IS A PARTY FOR THE FUTURE

~ Tatiana Kazim and Kayin Scholtz

Early childhood is a critically important phase. Yet none of the political parties contesting the May elections focus on the needs of the country's youngest children, say the authors



On Saturday 20 April, early childhood development (ECD) practitioners, parents, caregivers, activists and members of civil

EARLY YEARS

society members will march with the Real Reform for ECD Movement in Johannesburg in pursuit of a common purpose: ensuring that whoever leads South Africa after the general election makes the futures of our youngest generation a top priority.

Early childhood is a critically important phase of a child's life. To unlock their potential, young children need nurturing care across five key areas: nutrition; early learning; health; caregiving; and safety and protection.

Yet most young children do not receive this critical support, and they carry the consequences of this lack of attention throughout their lives. Only a third of children aged three to five attend a crèche, nursery school, playgroup or other programme, and one in four children under five experience stunting.

Even where children do access early learning programmes, ECD practitioners struggle to provide nutritious food, adequate infrastructure, and age-appropriate stimulation for learning, with the subsidy from the government frozen at just R17 per eligible child per day since 2019. Indeed, a large part of the problem is that funding for ECD is entirely inadequate. Children aged zero to five make up 10% of the population but, in 2021/22, less than 2% of total government spending went to interventions for young children – despite the fact that ECD has been shown to be one of the most powerful investments a government can make.

The consequences of failing to support young children are profound. Less than half of children aged four and five are on track for early learning. As is well known by now, 80% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning.

This cannot go on. While there have been positive developments for young children, the pace of improvement has been slow and inconsistent. Though the Department of Basic Education's new ECD strategy is promising, we still do not see consistent prioritisation of the needs of young children across different spheres of government.



The Equal Education Law Centre has received reports from play groups, toy libraries and mobile programmes whose funding has been cut in the last two years and on whom new, inappropriate and onerous registration requirements have been imposed. The

Gauteng Department of Health is suddenly withdrawing nutrition support to any ECD programme that is not registered with the Department of Basic Education - despite the formidable and well-documented obstacles to registration, especially for ECD programmes serving disadvantaged communities. Taking into account inflation, the freezing of the ECD subsidy for the sixth year in a row amounts to a cut of about one quarter, leaving ECD practitioners less able to buy food, toys, cleaning products and other essential supplies.

Against this backdrop, the lack of attention paid to our youngest generation by those standing for election is striking.

Reading through the political parties' manifestos, it is clear young children continue to be forgotten.

The Centre for Early Childhood Development's review of the manifestos of the largest political parties highlights how little consideration is given to the particular needs of South Africa's youngest.

While most political parties include some mention of ECD, they tend to focus narrowly on early learning. Recognition of the importance of responsive caregiving, good health or adequate nutrition is scant. Responsive caregiving, in particular, is completely overlooked: no political party includes clear plans for supporting parents and families to ensure that their children are protected from harm, receive love and care, and have their needs understood and met.

Alarming, no political party includes plans to improve coordination and delivery of services for young children, either: a startling omission, giving the fundamental importance of coordination in delivering the five components of nurturing care.

To reverse years of neglect of our youngest citizens, we need early childhood development to be top of the political agenda. That is why the Real Reform for ECD Movement's ECD Manifesto is so important. The ECD Manifesto is the result of extensive consultation with the ECD sector. It sets out key actions that must be taken in order to ensure that South Africa's young children can grow, develop and thrive. These include ensuring that nutrition support reaches all eligible children attending ECD centres, increasing the value of the ECD subsidy with additional amounts to support the inclusion of children with disabilities, and increasing the value of the Child Support Grant so that it meets the food poverty line.

We are 30 years into our democracy, and the government has yet to properly support and invest in our youngest children and the vital work of those who care for them. The period from 2024 to 2029 is our time to change this.

Already, over 5,000 people and more than 120 organisations have shown their support for the ECD Manifesto. We call on parents, caregivers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, anyone who cares about children and anyone who cares about the future of South Africa to stand with us and sign on to the ECD Manifesto.

We call on all political parties to endorse the ECD Manifesto

too. In doing so, they will show their commitment to unlocking the potential of young children, to caring for the needs of parents and families, to supporting and respecting women and the work that they do, and to realising the just, equal, and caring society we strive to become.

A party for the children is a party for the future.

Tatiana Kazim is a senior legal researcher at the Equal Education Law Centre and Kayin Scholtz is the Project Lead of Umncedi at DG Murray Trust. They both represent their organisations on the Real Reform for ECD steering committee.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of GroundUp.

Article first published in and available at:
www.groundup.org.za/article/elections-2024-a-party-for-children-is-a-party-for-the-future/

SOUTH AFRICAN NON-PROFIT NARROWLY AVOIDS DEATH AFTER R600,000 CYBERATTACK

~ Ashraf Hendricks

After months of uncertainty, The Big Issue is back on its feet thanks to a number of donors.

In June 2023, the magazine was scammed out of R600,000 and its survival was at stake. The funds were stolen by a scammer posing as the magazine's printer who requested a change to the bank account number.

None of the stolen money has been recovered. The banks and police were unable to assist.

"So that's over. I'm not trying anymore," says Derek Carelse, the managing director.



Carelse says staff have now had cybercrime and phishing training, and new protocols have been put in place. He encourages all companies to do likewise.

Anyone in a company can be a target, whether a cleaner or the managing director, he says.

The operational costs for The Big Issue are about R3.5-million a year.

Big Issue vendors sell the magazine on the streets for R30, and half of the money goes to them. The organisation also runs skills development workshops.

Mkhululi Magqabi, one of over 100 Big Issue vendors in Cape Town, lives in Driftsands, Khayelitsha. He has been selling the magazine for over eight years. He depends on the income.

He was unaware The Big Issue had been scammed. If the magazine closed down it would cause a lot of suffering, he said.



*Mkhululi Magqabi has been selling The Big Issue for over eight years.
Photo: Ashraf Hendricks / GroundUp*

Magqabi sells the magazine at traffic lights in Observatory from 8am until at least 6pm. He says he sells four to ten magazines a day. He also sells knitwear, such as hats, hand-stitched trinkets and thermal cooking bags. Some of these skills he learnt at workshops run by The Big Issue.

The full report can be found at:
www.mybroadband.co.za/news/security/533369-south-african-non-profit-narrowly-avoids-death-after-r600000-cyberattack.html