



## **Declaration of Intent by the participants of the “Children’s Right to Play” workshop held in Johannesburg in October 2011**

We, the representatives of civil society organisations from the Southern African Region (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia and Mozambique), met under the auspices of terre des hommes, Germany on 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011 at Mazenod Centre, Germiston.

We take cognizance of Article 31 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>i</sup> which indicates that:

1. “States Parties recognize the rights of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the rights of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity” 1

In recognition of the vulnerability of children in the Southern African Region, we, the participants have undertaken, on behalf of our respective organisations, to work co-operatively together in a **play coalition** called “**A Chance to Play Southern Africa**” in order to:

- Promote play opportunities for children in the SADC Region
- Involve government departments, other civil society organisations and the wider public in identifying play spaces and play opportunities.

We are committed to:

- Advocating for play opportunities
- Provision of play opportunities
- Ensuring that play is part of each government and government department’s plan, as well as being reflected in the budgets of each government and their departments
- Dissemination of information regarding play and play opportunities
- Advocacy regarding the mainstreaming of indigenous games in the Southern African Region
- Support for organisations providing play opportunities
- Provision of training and training material

We are concerned that play is being neglected in the Southern African Region for the following reasons: a lack of appropriate safe play spaces, a lack of knowledge regarding the importance of play, a lack of a regulatory framework for safeguarding children and their rights, and the fact that play is not seen as a priority in schools and other places where children come together. Furthermore significant dates such as 28<sup>th</sup> May (International Play Day) are not given full recognition. However, we acknowledge the progress that has been made in networking between civil society organisations, and that there are individual efforts at providing play but they are not co-ordinated. We also recognise the role that children can play as agents of change in their communities.

We call on the decision makers, community members, the media, educators, parents and children, to value our children and their inherent right to play, and to promote and support this in every way possible.

The benefits of play are immense. Play is “nature’s training for life”. It is crucial in children’s intellectual and physical growth, in their social and emotional development and it fosters flexibility and resilience. In a rapidly changing world play is often the key to children’s ability to cope and handle stress positively. Children develop holistically, i.e. using all their senses, physical and social skills, mental capacity and emotions together. Play provides a possibility for children to interact with other children and form relationships. They learn to adhere to rules and have the opportunity to work through trauma and grief. Furthermore play has the effect of preventing children from abuse when they are able to play in a safe environment. Finally, play is a key component in preserving community and culture in the broadest sense. It stimulates healthy interaction across generations.

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<sup>i</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted 20 November 1989

terre des hommes Germany ( South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Moçambique, Namíbia, Angola, Germany)  
ADDC - Mozambique  
Rede de Crianca- Mozambique  
Associao Kanimambo – Mozambique  
Farm Orphan Support Trust- Zimbabwe  
Midlands Aids Service Organisation- Zimbabwe  
Community Arts Projects- Zimbabwe  
WIMSA - Namibia  
Active Schools Initiative - SA  
Oosterland Youth Centre- SA  
Sophakama CBD - SA  
Ubuntu Education Fund - SA  
Umzingisi Foundation- SA  
Johannesburg Child Welfare - SA  
Active Learning Libraries SA -SA  
Woz'obona SEP - SA  
Child Rights Centre - SA  
Community Youth Concern - Zambia  
Centre for Study on Violence and Reconciliation - SA  
National Association for Child Care Workers –( NACCW) - SA  
Media Hussies -SA