



# Beaufort West Municipality

COMMUNITY CHILD RIGHTS WORKSHOPS REPORT  
JULY 2023



**Commissioner  
for Children**  
OF THE WESTERN CAPE

**#littlevoicesMUSTcount  
#kleinstemmetjiesMOETsaakmaak  
#amazwiamancinciMAKAVAKALE**



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## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the children in Beaufort West Municipality for sharing lived realities, as well as your wisdom with us. All the best for your future.

*These community service site visits and CCRWs are key strategies for the WCCC to gather information on the character of childhoods in the province and the lived realities experienced by children in the context of their communities and homes.*

We are grateful to the stakeholders in Education, Social Development, Health as well as Cultural Affairs and Sport departments. You welcomed us into your service sites, and we exchanged views with you about children's rights realisation.

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**The Commissioner for Children is appointed to protect and promote the rights, needs, and interests of children in the Western Cape province.**



## Executive Summary

The Beaufort West Municipality Community Child Rights Workshops (CCRWs) was the sixth initiative of its kind by the Western Cape Commissioner for Children (WCCC), after the completion of similar visits to Matzikama, Bergrivier, Hessequa, Bitou and Prince Albert municipalities. Three (3) members of the WCCC team travelled over 1 441km over five days from 7-12 March 2022 to engage 382 children and 48 adults. With this visit, we were most excited to go to Murraysburg, which is the northernmost community of the Western Cape, just before the Eastern Cape border.

These community service site visits and CCRWs are key strategies for the WCCC to gather information on the character of childhoods in the province and the lived realities experienced by children in the context of their communities and homes. These workshops employ experiential learning methods to encourage children to share community safety maps, their personal dreams, and the worries of children in their communities. They also get the opportunity to share recommendations for service improvements with the departments of Education, Health, Social Development as well as Cultural Affairs and Sport, using the WCCC as a platform to report on their contributions. The authentic voice of children, parents and service providers are represented in the reports of the WCCC by presenting their charts and cards they illustrate and write on. Key quotes are used liberally in the reports and form the basis of findings and analysis.

Key findings from the data collected from children on community safety maps point to the fact that children are aware of illegal activities in their communities and that they need to steer clear of these spaces and places for their own safety. There are also dangers from their natural

environment such as rivers and their built environment such as roads. Some homes and service sites, where children feel protected, are safe places in their communities.

In children's dreams and worries the provincial trend continues of children wanting to achieve success with professional careers or celebrity status. The children want to be able to live a comfortable life and some want to improve the lives of other children in need when they become adults. This mindset seems to be a coping mechanism for their current harsh realities. Children worry about social ills such as poverty, violence, and substance abuse. There is a hint of hopelessness as they are concerned about whether their schooling will lead them to their dreams and aspirations. Overall, children feel let down by adults in their lives.

The government is requested by the children to provide more social services and health facilities. The lack of respect for the dignity of children in schools is still a pervasive theme. Adult service providers speak out about the failure of many parents to fulfil their legal duties towards their children. This places service providers in the unfair position of having to act as 'miracle workers' to heal society. There are no alternative care or rehabilitative care options in this municipality. This makes it more difficult to keep families together. In these circumstances, the professionals frequently suffer from burnout. In the same vein, technical schools and special needs schools are rare and the Central Karoo does not have an Arts and Culture Federation. The dearth of service sites and organised forums places a huge burden on existing service providers.

In conclusion, WCCC would like to emphasise that we need to provide

greater support to parents to play their roles as primary duty bearers of children's rights more effectively. We must care for the secondary carers in government and NGOs who are stepping into this breach. Government can start to be more supportive by providing service infrastructure in this municipal area, where none exists.

## Introduction

The Western Cape Commissioner for Children visited the Beaufort West Municipality from 7-12 March 2022, engaging with adult service providers and children at service sites and in schools. As per the guidance of the Department of Health, the WCCC did not convene meetings with parents to comply with COVID precautions – we engaged parents who were waiting outside a clinic. For ease of access, the Commissioner conducted workshops with children in Merweville on her visit to the Prince Albert Municipality in November 2021, these findings will be included in the Beaufort West report. In the town of Beaufort West, we visited with the social workers from civil society and government at the Department of Social Development district offices, 3 high schools, 2 clinics, a youth hub, a museum, a gym, a swimming pool, as well as a Mass Opportunity Development (MOD) programme. We also conducted meetings with Molo Songololo's *It's Your Move* children's group and later a gender-based violence stakeholders' group. In Murraysburg, we conducted workshops at the National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) safe park and the high school (including a consultation on the representative council of learners, for our topical consultations' report). It was an extremely busy week.

*This report presents the key insights gleaned from the WCCC engagements with children and service providers.*



*Important to note is the declining matric pass rate; which declined from 79.9% in 2018 to 70% in 2020.*

This report presents the key insights gleaned from the WCCC engagements with children and service providers. Where possible, primary data will be presented at granular level so that government departments can understand the context of concerns and accurately plan intervention, if necessary. Before delving into this primary data, below we present the socio-economic profiles of the municipality that the WCCC visited, which help frame the context of the communities visited.

## DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>1</sup>

Beaufort West is the most populous municipality in the Central Karoo, boasting a total number of 51 177 residents in 2021. In terms of the child population, there are 15 514 children between 0 – 14 years of age. It is unclear how many 15 to 17-year-olds reside in the area due to the manner in which StatsSA reports on data.

## EDUCATION<sup>2</sup>

There are 18 schools in the municipality, which is inclusive of 14 no-fee schools. This partially represents the socio-economic realities of the municipalities, as most households cannot afford school fees. As of 2020, there were 11 300 children enrolled in schools across the municipality, which represents 76,9% of the learner population in the Central Karoo District.

In terms of education outcomes, Beaufort West had a matric pass rate of 70.9% — this is 10% lower than the provincial pass rate of that year (i.e. 80%). Important to

note is the declining matric pass rate; which declined from 79.9% in 2018 to 70% in 2020.

## HEALTH PROVISION<sup>3</sup>

The Beaufort West municipal area had 10 primary healthcare clinics (PHC) in 2019, which comprises of 5 fixed and 5 Satellite and mobile clinics as well as 1 Community Day Centre (CDC).

## POVERTY<sup>4</sup>

Real GDP per capita in the Beaufort West municipal area was R41 436 in 2020 which is slightly lower than the District average of R42 057 and extremely below the Western Cape real GDP of R84 967. The highest GDP per capita in the Central Karoo district was observed in Laingsburg (R52 791) in 2020.

## BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY<sup>5</sup>

With a total of 13 868 households in the Beaufort West municipal area, 97.9% had access to formal housing, which is higher than the district average of 97.0% in 2019. Residents of the municipal area also enjoyed relatively high levels of access to basic services i.e. access to piped water inside/within 200 m of the dwelling 98.0%, access to a flush or chemical toilet at 92.8% access to electricity (for lighting) at 92.6% and the removal of refuse at least weekly by local authority at 84.2% of all households. These access levels were above the District averages, except for piped water which is on par with the district.

<sup>1</sup> Western Cape Government (2021). Socio-economic profile: Beaufort West Municipality  
<sup>2</sup> IBID

<sup>3</sup> IBID  
<sup>4</sup> IBID  
<sup>5</sup> IBID

## Key insights from visits around Beaufort West Municipality

The main town of **Beaufort West** is the largest in the **Central Karoo District**. The municipality stretches from **Merweville** to **Murraysburg**. Merweville is more proximate to the town of Prince Albert (which is only 89km away) yet forms part of the Beaufort West Municipality. Murraysburg is closer to the Eastern Cape Town of Graaf Reinet, which is 93 km away. The provincial border between the Eastern and Western Cape is approximately 40 km from Murraysburg. The large distances between the communities are made more stark by the arid environments around them.

The Beaufort West Municipality is frequently in the news for governance crises. When we entered the town, we noted that a water borehole has been sunk by Gift of the Givers (a renowned national humanitarian NGO). Children as well as adults raised governance concerns with us. The concern about local government functioning was raised by scholars and child human rights defenders alike. Children worry about corruption i.e. ‘the lack of money’, ‘no water’, ‘air pollution’. They opine: “The municipality is not doing its work.” Children are worried about the governance of their communities. They said: “*Ek is bekommerd oor die munisipaliteit*” (*I am worried about the municipality*). Children suspect there is something amiss with their municipal management.

Adults in the stakeholder’s forum were keen for us to understand that monies had been misspent in this municipality. Some even accompanied us to a ‘white elephant’ building, half completed near the Mandlenkosi Clinic.

## METHOD OF ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN

We commenced the Beaufort West Community Child Rights Workshops in Merweville in November 2021 (as part of our visit to Prince Albert Municipality). The visits to the town of Beaufort West and the community of Murraysburg were conducted in March 2022, when the hotter weather abated.

TABLE 1: WCCC Beaufort West schedule

DATE	INSTITUTION	TOWN
6/11/21	George Fredericks Primary School	Merweville
7/3/22	DSD Badisa GBV Social worker	Beaufort West
8/3/22	Beaufort-Wes Sekondêr Bastiaanse Sekondêre Skool	Beaufort West
9/3/22	Mandlenkosi Secondary School Hoërskool Sentraal Molo Songololo	Beaufort West
10/3/22	Kwa- Mandlenkosi Clinic Beaufort-West CDC DCAS	Beaufort West
11/3/22	Murraysburg Hoërskool National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW)	Murraysburg

The standard activities were implemented in the workshops with children at six (6) schools which included community safety mapping, dreams and worries sharing, and making recommendations to WCCC-mandated government departments.

Other workshop adaptations included conducting child rights consultation workshops focussing on the topic of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) at Mandlenkosi High, Sentraal High, and Murraysburg High schools.



*The concern about local government functioning was raised by scholars and child human rights defenders alike.*

## Discussion of Workshop Findings

TABLE 2: Number of children engaged per community/area who participated in the Community Child Rights workshops

COMMUNITY / AREA	NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CCRWS
Bastiaanse Sec	41
Beaufort West	62
Mandlenkosi	61
Sentraal	33
Murraysburg	61
George Fredricks High School	18

*The aim of these meetings was to understand the community context, social determinants of disease, service challenges and cooperation among stakeholders.*

The WCCC team engaged service providers in the child protection system, at the clinic and at the MOD programme and engaged parents waiting outside the clinic. The aim of these meetings was to understand the community context, social determinants of disease, service challenges and cooperation among stakeholders. Adult service providers were also provided with an opportunity to make recommendations to the management of government departments.

### ACTIVITY 1: COMMUNITY SAFETY MAPPING

#### Method

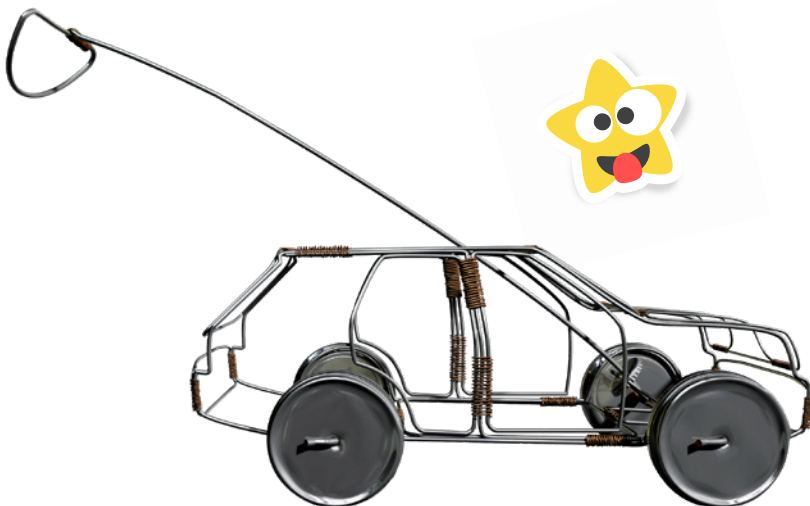
Community safety mapping is a useful activity for the Commissioner for Children to affirm children's knowledge of their own communities, build trust and gain insight into children's worldviews. They provide reasons for their assessment of safe and dangerous spaces. This information is invaluable when service providers focusing on children's safety would like to improve communities for enhanced wellbeing of children. The section below presents examples of community safety maps and discusses some themes that emerge from children's views of their communities.

The children in Beaufort West schools live in different communities. They provided insights about the communities of Hillside, Essopville, "Informal settlement" (Plakerskamp) around "Falatsha and Alfred Nzo" Streets which may be the same or different to "Kwa-mandlenkosi location". The children at George Fredericks Primary School provided information about Merweville.

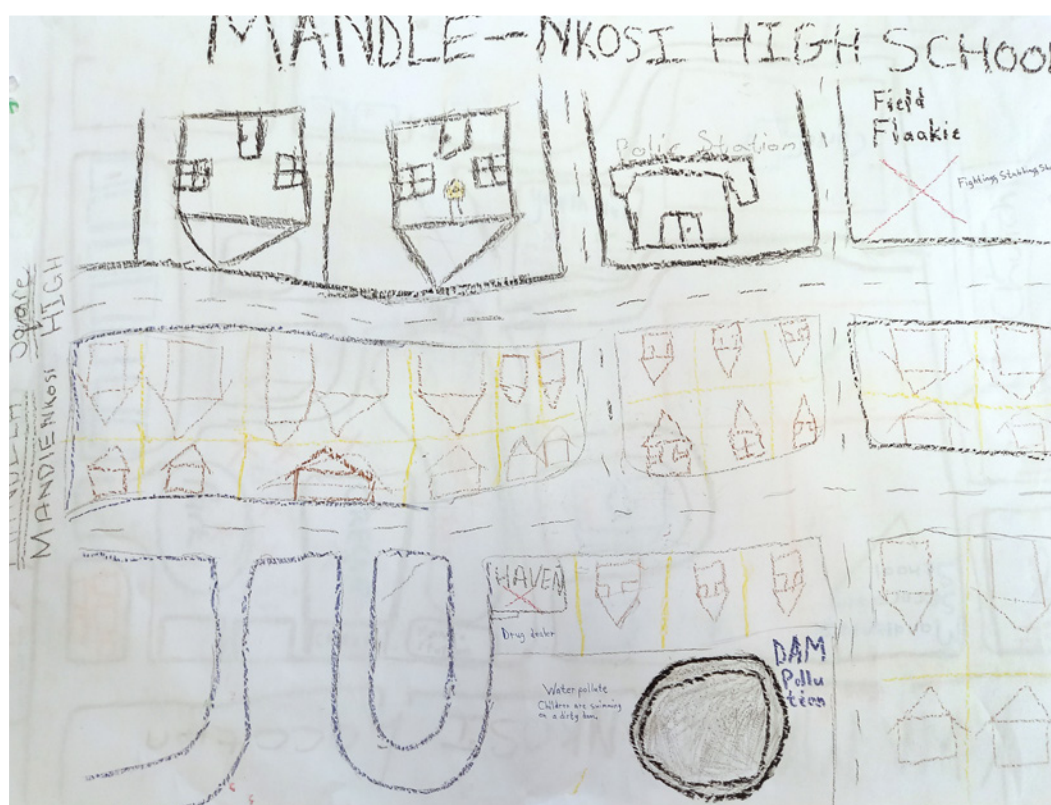
#### Dangerous places

##### HILLSIDE

The places deemed dangerous are very similar to the ones in other municipalities. 'Drug dealers houses', 'taverns', and 'weed houses' were considered dangerous because they "sell drugs to children under 18", there is "substance abuse" there, and "they let the children do their dirty work". The "park" is considered unsafe because "children are being raped" there. Some







Mandlenkosi

'shops' are also dangerous places because "people get robbed everyday" and there are 'many junkies.' Other 'shops' are deemed safer if children can "get [their] wants and needs". The houses near '8th avenue' (8de laan) are dangerous because "there are many junkies who rob or kill people".

### ESSOPVILLE

Children are concerned about other children's exposure to substance abuse. They said: "Oom Tom's Tavern will influence children to drink". The 'electricity box' is unsafe "because the children may shock".

### PLAKERSKAMP

Buildings were demarcated safe and unsafe along Faltasa Street. Some buildings along Faltasa Street are unsafe. They are unsafe because "they are smoking weed, tik, tabaco and they are gangsters, they are breaking people's houses", "it is not good because they

don't respect people and they are selling weed", and "it is not good because adults don't wanna feed children". Although, 'Luvuyo's Shop' is good, "Luvuyo's Tavern is not good because they sell alcohol [to] children."

The youth hub is considered a safe and dangerous place: safe because "you can be encouraged to be a bodybuilder" but dangerous because "you can be influenced to smoke".

The river is deemed dangerous as "you can drown, or you can die". In addition, "children are swimming in a dirty dam".

### KWAMANDLENKOSI LOCATION

Several buildings, spaces, and places in KwaMandlenkosi are demarcated as dangerous or unsafe on the posters submitted by children. The game shop, Gamka, market.

*Community safety mapping is a useful activity for the Commissioner for Children to affirm children's knowledge of their own communities, build trust and gain insight into children's worldviews.*

[illegible]

The map is a hand-drawn layout of a village. At the top left, a box labeled 'Hillside' contains a red 'X'. Below it, a large area is filled with many small, simple house shapes. To the right of this area is a red 'X'. Further right, a building is labeled 'Drug Dealer' with a red 'X' and 'Can cause to bring children'. Below it is a building labeled 'Taiven' with a red 'X' and 'Substance Abuse can cause children to be the way off'. To the right of these is a building labeled 'shop' with a green checkmark. Above the 'shop' is a building labeled 'Hillside' with a red 'X' and 'Hillside the village is a very busy place'. To the right of the 'shop' is a building labeled 'Primary School' with a green checkmark. Above the 'Primary School' is a building labeled 'Beaufort-Wales Primary School' with a green checkmark. To the right of the 'Primary School' is a building labeled 'S.' with a green checkmark. Below the 'Primary School' is a building labeled 'Power Station' with a green checkmark and 'get free electricity'. To the right of the 'Power Station' is a building labeled 'Park' with a red 'X' and a drawing of a wheel. Below the 'Park' is a building labeled 'Creche' with a green checkmark and 'Children are safe and they are being taken care of by people'. At the bottom left, a building is labeled 'Shop' with a green checkmark and 'Many children'. At the bottom right, a building is labeled 'Creche' with a green checkmark and 'Children are safe and they are being taken care of by people'. The map is drawn in blue ink on a white background.





Beaufort West  
Safety Map

OMG



## MURRAYSBURG

In Murraysburg the children depicted the roads as dangerous, and the school was unsafe when corporal punishment was implemented.

## MERWEVILLE

Robbery and drugs are the main concern for children in Merweville. Drugs are sold at some shops, children reported: "The children buy drugs at the shop." (*Die kinders koop dwelms by die winkel.*) The clinic was identified as an unsafe place sometimes as children are robbed there.

## Safe places

### HILLSIDE

Safe places include service sites. At the 'power station' as one can get "free electricity", at the 'creche' the "children are safe and being cared for properly". There are also "many good people" in the houses at "10th avenue" (10de laan). At

"Beaufort-West Primary School children get a good education".

## ESSOPVILLE

Some "houses" are safe because "it is a place where children will be protected."

## INFORMAL SETTLEMENT (PLAKERSKAMP OR KWA-MANDLENKOSI)

Safe buildings are where there are "good people because they are helping homeless people and give them shelter", they are "good because they provide money for the community", and there is "a church and they help us". The "game shop [is] good because children go play games without violence". "Luvuyo's Shop is good because they sell us our basic needs/wants."

## MURRAYSBURG

In Murraysburg the children appreciated the Isibindi service site. They said: "Isibindi





Murraysburg Isibindi Workshop

is fun – learn, eat, play” (*Isibindi is lekker – leer, kos, speel*). They added: “Children are here for their protection” (*Kinders is hier vir beskerming*). The primary school was also a positive place “to learn” (*vir leer*) and “to eat from the school food garden” (*ons eet baie lekker by ons skool tuin*). The church was identified as a safe place “to praise the Lord” (*om die Here te dien*).

## MERWEVILLE

Service sites such as clinics, schools, the E-centre and churches are demarcated as safe and good places for children. The children appreciated their school, they said: “George Fredericks Primer Skool, we come here to learn.” (George Fredericks Primer Skool – kom hier om te leer). Even though children worry about being robbed at the clinic they also acknowledge that it is a service to help them stay healthy.

## Analysis of community safety

Places where illegal activities happen are generally considered dangerous for children. This includes places that sell drugs or alcohol to minors. Some recreational spaces such as parks are also unsafe when irresponsible or criminal adults are present. Natural environments such as rivers also present danger as there is the risk of drowning. The built environment such as roads are unsafe due to the risk of injury from accidents. Sadly, schools are still unsafe due to the continued practice of corporal punishment.

Some homes and service sites were deemed safe. Churches, shelters, Isibindi and some schools were safe as there were helpful and good people who care about the children there. Homes are safe when children are protected from harm.



## Activity 2: Dreams and Worries

Dreams and worries sharing was the second standard activity in our workshop, all information was shared anonymously on cards only denoting the school or community of origin, to organise the data later. At this stage, children are expected to share a personal dream for the future. However, they are cautioned to note only a general worry relating to children in their community. They are advised if they would like to share a personal worry, they must contact the Commissioner via WhatsApp, her contact number is shared during each workshop. When personal worries are received, referrals are made to a social worker to manage.

the children included becoming a 'doctor' (the most popular choice), 'educator', 'social worker', 'lawyer', 'psychologist', or 'law enforcement officer'. This is very similar to the trend elsewhere. The unique professions at this school were the hope to become a 'journalist' or 'architect'. Only one child chose each of these professions. In the arts, children wanted to become a 'rapper', 'gospel singer' or 'actress.' The entrepreneurial aspirants did not specify their choice of business direction but did assert that they wanted to be able to afford a car and a house. The potential sports stars wanted to play professional 'soccer'. One sporty child expressed that they wanted to help their community when they became successful. They said: "I will give the people who struggle some money. (*Ek sal vir die mense wat swaarkry geld gee*)."

Most children who responded wanted to have professional careers in the future.

### DREAMS

Children from four high schools in Beaufort West, one high school in Merweville, and one high school in Murraysburg, shared their dreams with the team from the Commissioner for Children's office. There was an eagerness to engage with interested adults. A child at one of the schools said: "I always wanted to open up to people and today I got a chance." Children appreciate being able to share their views and opinions. Some children even felt safe enough to share their vulnerabilities. One child shared: "I don't have a dream." When children write to adults anonymously, they can feel free to share their truths.

### Bastiaanse Sekondêre Skool (SS)

The dreams of the 41 participating children at Bastiaanse SS focussed on professional occupations and talent recognition in sports or the arts as well as aspiring to be entrepreneurs. The professional dreams of

### Beaufort Wes Sekondêre Skool (SS)

The 62 children, who participated in the workshop at Beaufort West Secondary School, had professional dreams. Arts, sports, and entrepreneurship also featured as potential career options. These children also articulated their views on success, which included experiencing travel and safety. Once again medical professions dominated the choices, with being a 'doctor', 'nurse', 'radiographer', or 'dentist' being named as options. 'Social work', 'education', 'law', and 'law enforcement' were other popular options for future careers. The outliers were those aspiring to become an 'architect', 'priest', 'engineer', 'diesel mechanic', or work in 'nature conservation.' The art-oriented learners wanted to become either a 'singer', 'actor', or 'rapper'. There were seven (7) learners in the group who wanted to become entrepreneurs. The

*Children appreciate being able to share their views and opinions. Some children even felt safe enough to share their vulnerabilities.*

sports enthusiasts saw themselves as professional 'soccer players' or 'gamers.'

Success was described in terms of having material possessions, or having a family, or being able to travel and being safe. One child considered a marker of success to be leaving a legacy, they asserted that they wanted to be successful so that: "my children can follow in my footsteps (*sodat my kinders kan volg na my*)."

Children also expressed that they would be successful if they were 'independent', 'free from worry', and 'safe'. For some, their dream was to 'travel the world'. One of the children articulated: "I want to be able to fly so that I can move to Korea. (*Ek wil 'n vlieënier word en na Korea toe trek*)."

These children's views of the future were much more expansive including ideas of success and travel.

'police', 'army', 'social worker' and 'lawyer'. An aspirant lawyer wanted to be "a politician and fight for people's rights." Unique choices included becoming an 'inventor', 'ranger', 'journalist', 'working in information technology', 'singer' 'artist' or becoming an 'entrepreneur' or 'engineer'. Becoming a doctor was viewed as the most prestigious career option.

A few children also alluded to 'family' and 'travel' as being part of their vision for the future. Others spoke about civic duty. One child noted: "I want to give back to the community like Gift of the Givers." Another child shared: "I want to build junkies a shelter so that they don't sleep on the streets and be hungry." Children at this school demonstrated an empathy for those less fortunate than themselves.

*Success was described in terms of having material possessions, or having a family, or being able to travel and being safe. One child considered a marker of success to be leaving a legacy,*

## Mandlenkosi Secondary School

Almost half (28) of the 61 children who participated in the workshop wanted to become a 'doctor'. Five (5) children wanted to become 'teachers'. Two (2) or three (3) chose options such as 'scientist',

## George Fredericks Primer Skool

The 18 children who participated in the dreams activity mostly wanted to have 'a good job' to take care of family or become a 'social worker' to help the



Mandlenkosi Secondary School



Commissioner  
with Murraysburg  
Senior Secondary  
School (SSS)  
learners

Children  
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community. One child said they want: “a good job to take care of my mother and to show the community that I made it in life. (*‘n goeie werk om vir my ma te sorg en vir die gemeenskap te wys dat ek dit gemaak het*).” Dreams of being a ‘doctor’, policeman’, ‘farmer’, ‘rapper’, or ‘actress’, was less popular. The concern for family and community seemed to predominate dreams.

### Murraysburg Senior Secondary School (SSS)

There were almost as many aspirant ‘teachers’ (11) as ‘doctors’ (14) in the group of 45 learners who participated in the workshop at Murraysburg SSS. Others wanted to become lawyers or form part of law enforcement. There were two children who wanted to become ‘social workers’ and one child noted they want to be the ‘Children’s Commissioner’. As usual, the art-related professions included becoming an ‘artist’, ‘acting’ or being a ‘rapper’. There was one child who wanted to “make videos for YouTube”. Amongst the entrepreneurs, there was a child who

wanted to “open a restaurant”. There was one aspirant ‘soccer’ professional. A civic-minded child said: “I want to protect children one day and keep families together. (*Ek wil eendag kinders veilig hou en families bymekaar hou*).” Children dream about being professionals.

### Hoërskool Sentraal

The central theme of feedback from the 33 learners at Hoërskool Sentraal was to be successful in the future. Success was described as having a ‘dream job’, ‘attending university’, ‘happiness’, ‘family and friends’, being ‘famous’, enjoying a ‘luxury life’, having a ‘beautiful house and three cars’, ‘travelling’ or being rich/wealthy.’ The most popular professional aspirations included becoming a ‘doctor’, ‘psychologist’ or ‘social worker’ or even a ‘netball star’. Unique professions were to be an ‘accountant’, ‘actor’, ‘professional cyclist’, ‘motivational speaker’, ‘teacher’ or ‘engineer’. Civic-minded children wanted to improve the wellbeing of others, one said they wanted to: “make sure children are safe and educated”. An interesting



contribution from one child was that: "we have a woman as President not just men all the time." Being a success in the future was important to many children at this school.

## Summary of dreams

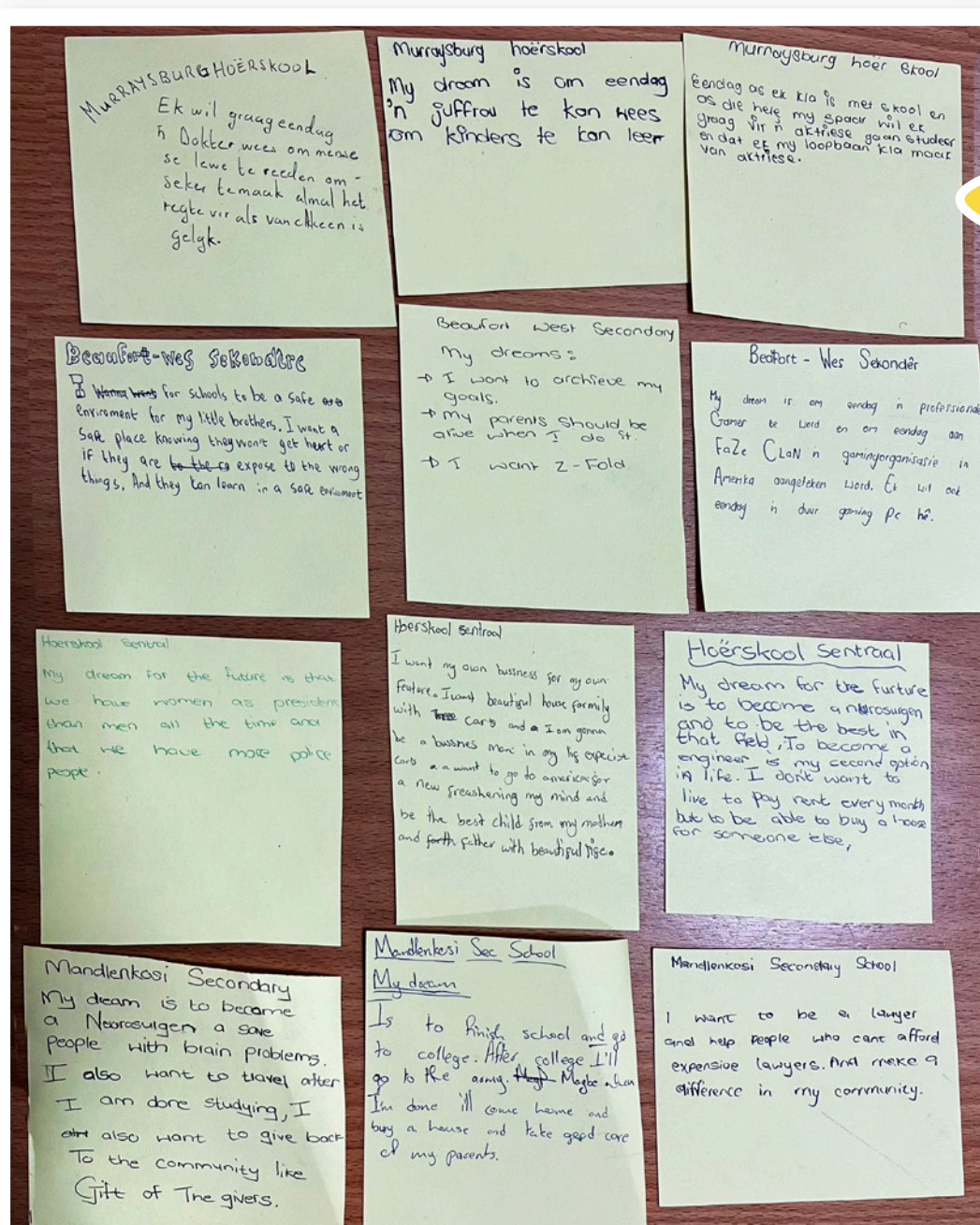
Becoming a professional or a celebrity is the key to success according to children in Beaufort West. They dream of high-level, traditional professions like becoming

a doctor or lawyer. Alternatively, joining the workforce as teachers, nurses, or law enforcement officers. There are some unique dreams relating to the arts and social media, but these are few. The anticipated consequence of success is being able to afford mansions and several cars. Children want to attain success to live a comfortable life. Some children are also civic-minded and want to improve the lives of the less fortunate.



Picture of dreams

*Becoming a professional or a celebrity is the key to success according to children in Beaufort West.*



## WORRIES

### Bastiaanse Sekondere Skool

Children are worried about the vagaries of poverty, social ills affecting children, as well as safety at home and school. When children speak of concerns about impoverished circumstances, they refer to 'dirty houses' or 'lack of housing', 'hunger', 'unwashed children', and other health issues. One child said about housing that children are worried because "they do not have a place to stay (*het nie bly plek nie*).” They also see many social ills such as the abuse of alcohol, drugs, smoking and the incidence of gangs in their communities. A child articulated this concern about the prevalence of gangs: "Children cannot even walk around as the town is surrounded by 'skollies', and gang members are dangerous. (*Kinders mag nie eers rondloop nie want die dorp is omring van skollies en bendeledede is gevaarlik*).” The effect of poverty weighs heavily on the minds of children at Bastiaanse SS.

Safety at home and school are concerning due to the treatment of children by their parents and worries about violence at school. Children say some parents are 'neglectful', 'drunk', 'absent' or 'beat' and 'abuse' their children. At school, there is a concern about bullies. One child noted that in school "children stab each other with knives (*hulle steek mekaar*).” Other types of violence which also concern children are the incidence of 'rape' and 'suicide'. The occurrence of violence is a grave concern.

Children also worry about their prospects for the future. They are worried that so many children 'leave or drop out' of school and what this will mean for their 'future' or 'work' options. Even after school, there is nothing for youth to become involved in. This picture belies the bright one painted

in the children's dreams of professional success.

### Beaufort Wes Sekondere Skool

Safety, poverty, social ills, treatment at school and by parents, as well as preoccupations about the future, were top of mind for children at Beaufort West SSS. Children note that the less fortunate have concerns about 'clothes', 'food', 'housing' and 'no car'. This is linked to their observation of social ills in their communities which include the use of 'tik', 'teen pregnancy', as well as abuse of 'drugs, alcohol and okkerpyp'. There are also worries about safety due to the violence from 'teen gangs', 'rape', 'daily bullying', and 'murder of children'. These incidences of violence even extended to schools where there is also abuse of 'dagga' and 'alcohol' as well as 'fighting with knives.' A child reported that there is sometimes 'fighting with educators' when children are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Another child reported that "the school is supposed to be a safe place but as I see it there is lots of fighting and trying to hurt each other." (*Die skool moet a veilige plek wees maar soos ek nou sien wil hulle net baklei en mekaar seermaak*). There are many threats to safety and wellbeing in the primary spaces children inhabit most of the time.

Children are stressed in their daily lives with their parents and at school and this anxiety also includes their concern about future wellbeing. Parents contribute to stress when they 'neglect', 'abandon' and 'abuse' their children. For example, a child said that dropping out can be attributed to "households that are not good (*huishoudings is nie goed nie*).” At school, children are worried that they will not pass their exams and whether they will realise their dreams. They are unsure how secure their future will be. Will they

When children speak of concerns about impoverished circumstances, they refer to 'dirty houses' or 'lack of housing', 'hunger', 'unwashed children', and other health issues.



attain 'employment', 'income', prosperity? Will they accomplish something in their lives? This worry leads to many mental health issues such as 'depression', and 'suicide'. Children then engage in unsafe relationships and negative lifestyles. A child noted: "I am afraid I do not reach my goal. (*ek is bang ek kom nie daar uit nie*)." The stress from daily life translates into anxieties about future wellbeing.

### **Mandlenkosi Secondary School**

The same pattern of concerns of children framed from experiences of poverty, social ills, lack of safety, and challenges to health and wellbeing; is repeated by the children at Mandlenkosi SSS. They characterise experiences of poverty in relation to 'homelessness', 'lack of food and clothing', as well as 'unemployment'. Children are worried about inter-generational criminality which includes 'becoming gangsters' and 'drug dealing'. One child shared that children often know people engaged in criminal activities. They said: "they have a friend who is dealing in drugs." Concerns about safety are expressed as a 'worry about kidnapping', 'rape', 'older men allowed with kids at taverns', 'selling their bodies for food or money', 'drunk drivers', 'violence', 'abuse' and 'bullying'. There is an emerging theme of the abuse that older men perpetrate against children.

Children are concerned about the wellbeing of their parents and families. They reported 'alcohol abuse', 'neglect', 'emotional abuse' from parents. Parents had their own struggles with substance abuse noted as 'drunk mothers' or 'depression'. Children noted parents were sick from COVID-19 or HIV, and some had experienced parents' dying. The lack of positive parenting and parental support was a notable concern for children.

School worries included the quality of education received, early dropouts, and fear of violence. Children were concerned that they are not receiving good enough education to enable university access as materials and equipment for learning and teaching is inadequate. They note teachers are retiring without new replacements entering the school. Children were aware that "education (was valuable) for their future." They were worried about peers who left the schooling system prematurely, reportedly "to become a gangster" or "become street people". Violence at schools could be one of the reasons that children leave school prematurely. A child articulated: "because they are scared of the children at school." Furthermore, a child shares: "The wrong of the children in Beaufort West is to kill each other and hurt each other." Children worry whether schools will equip them for their future life and the scourge of violence.

### **George Fredericks Primer Skool**

Child abuse was the biggest concern for the children at George Fredericks Primary School in Merwewille. The abuse came in the form of neglect or abuse by parents as well as other adults in the community taking advantage of children. Children saw other children with 'no school shoes or bag', 'broken clothes' and 'no food'. They see children being used at 'drug houses', 'adults selling drugs to children' and as a result become involved in 'drug use' and 'alcohol abuse.' One child reported the consequences: "Children as young from 10 years old are on tik. Then they rape children. Young children behave like they are adults. (*Kinders van 10 jaar oud rook al tik. En hulle verkrag kiners. Hier kinders vanaf jong ouderdom hou hulle groot mense*)." The cycle of abuse is a concern for children.

*Children are worried about inter-generational criminality which includes 'becoming gangsters' and 'drug dealing'. One child shared that children often know people engaged in criminal activities.*



Many children are worried about whether their parents will keep them on high school. They are unsure if they will finish school. They worry about studying and where they will get money to study further.

School is very 'stressful' and children worry about the future. This was expressed clearly by a child: "Many children are worried about whether their parents will keep them on high school. They are unsure if they will finish school. They worry about studying and where they will get money to study further. Many children are worried about what their lives will look like in a few years. The worst thing is that children wonder what will happen to them when their parents die. (*Baie kinders is bekommered oor hoe hul ouers hulle gaan op die hoërskool hou. Baie kinders is onseker of hulle skool gaan klaarmaak. Baie kinders bekommered oor studeer, hulle wonder waar gaan hulle geld kry om te studeer. Baie kinders is bekommerd oor hoe hul lewens gaan lyk na 'n paar jaar. En die ergste van als is dat kinders wonder wat gaan van hulle word as hulle ouers sterf*)." Schooling is considered a gateway to the future, but children are unsure whether they will be successful at school.

### Murraysburg Senior Secondary School

Children in Murraysburg are worried about the effects of poverty, resultant social ills, safety in the community, and premature school leavers. Children say that poverty is especially evident in how parents look after their children. There is no housing, food, or clothes, and some children are always 'dirty'. Other than neglect, parents are also abusive towards their children and children do not receive income from the direct income support from the government as the parents misuse the money. One child shared: "SASSA monies are used for drugs and alcohol" (*SASSA geld word gebruik vir dwelms en alcohol*). A further concern about substance abuse is that children are also involved in abusing substances. 'Teen pregnancy' is another concern. Children cannot always

play safely in communities as there are unsafe places. For example, a child noted that it is not safe: "where children swim and play (*waar kinders swem en speel*)." Children are concerned about the social ills that influence their lives as well as the lack of safety.

At school, children drop out prematurely when they connect with 'bad peers.' Those who remain in school are also worried about their future. They worry whether they will be able to follow their dreams. A child said in despair that children will: "not be able to even follow one of their dreams (*nie een van hul drome kan volg nie*)." With compromised schooling, dreams seem to be unattainable.

### Hoërskool Sentraal

At Hoërskool Sentraal there were more reports about concerns for children's emotional wellbeing in addition to the issues of poverty, social ills, safety and life at home and school. Children reported 'bullying at school' which could result in "bad thoughts about [one] self". One child articulated the concern is: "not being smart or good enough". Negative people put children down. This makes them feel as if they have 'no support' and they 'do not fit in'.

Poverty and social ills were evident in the form of 'unemployment', 'no housing', 'no clothes leading to experiences of 'child abandonment', 'abuse', 'bullying', 'rape by older men'. One child noted children "date older men for money and to feel the love that they need." Children go astray and become pregnant too early, a child said that children want to: "grow up too fast and do things... (*te vinning groot word en dinge doen*)." Social issues such as the abuse of substances are also a concern. The quality of life at home and in the community is poor for children.





Commissioner with  
Hoërskool Sentraal  
learners



At school, children reported having ‘bad teachers’ with ‘no degrees’ as well as having ‘not enough books.’ They assert that “everyone has a right to education” but they noted that this was hampered by ‘language barriers.’ However, it seems as if they are dissatisfied with the quality of education they are receiving. They are concerned that there is no support for future planning. One child said in dismay: “They don’t know how to make it out of Beaufort West.” Children feel schooling is not preparing them for their future.

### Summary of worries

Children across the municipality are worried about the evidence of poverty in the physical state of the children they see around them. They see adults and children fall into the trap of substance abuse and violence. Children get drawn in by adults into undesirable behaviours that will have negative consequences for their life choices. The concern for their future

wellbeing is stark. They wonder if they can make it through school successfully, study further, and become something in life.

## ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN’S DREAMS AND WORRIES

### Unsafe primary spaces

The primary spaces that children inhabit — in homes, schools, and the community — seem to be treacherous. Their worries are focussed on child rights violations that are perpetrated against them by the primary duty bearers (parents) and secondary duty bearers (adults at school) as well as moral duty bearers of child rights (other adults in their community). They must constantly negotiate these spaces and develop protection plans for themselves. They are pushed into negative community dynamics such as substance abuse, gangsterism and violence. Let down by the adults in their lives, they feel

*They assert that “everyone has a right to education” but they noted that this was hampered by ‘language barriers.’*

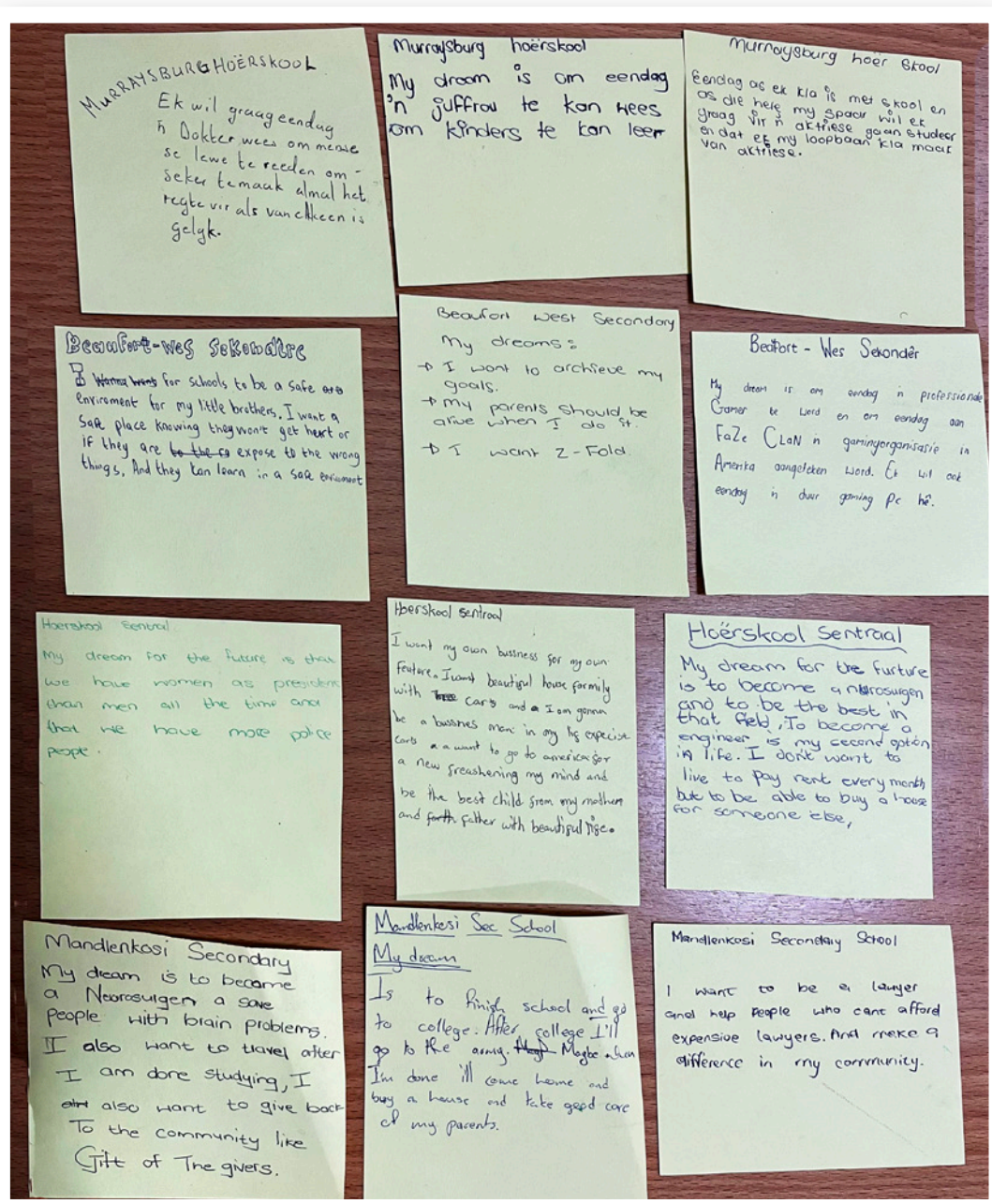
alone and unsupported. Their dreams seem a long way off and they worry that they will never realise them.

## Unrealistic dreams and harsh realities

Children's mostly unrealistic dreams of opulent success seem to be an antidote for the harsh realities they live in. When they contemplate both dreams and worries, these two notions become

entangled. The dreams are laced with worry and the worries give insight into why they need to create such fantastic dreams. They dream of professions beyond their academic aptitudes. They aspire to a celebrity status for their talents which must be identified and nurtured by the correct people to enable success. They want material comforts because they currently live a life of discomfort and deprivation.

*Children's mostly unrealistic dreams of opulent success seem to be an antidote for the harsh realities they live in. When they contemplate both dreams and worries, these two notions become entangled.*



Picture of worries



## Popular professions

Becoming a doctor is the most prestigious and popular career children choose almost every community visited by the Commissioner thus far. The children in Beaufort West Municipality also pointed to the conventional professions such as education, law, and law enforcement as being the career they aspire to. This is concerning as we are aware of educational outputs in this area which does not rationally translate into such large numbers of learners' ability to apply or be accepted into medical studies. The other careers they mention are the traditional ones they see or hear about in their community or in the media. This all seems like too much of a pipe dream, which may have inevitable disappointment as the endpoint.

We require much more guidance and support in helping children understand their own potential and aptitudes. Life orientation curriculum and education is critically important for this purpose. Is this being used effectively to give guidance to children about their future options and career opportunities? Are parents able to provide insight and specific support into the system of tertiary education and the breadth of employment options available to young people after matric? Considering the structural issues hampering the employment of especially low-skilled workers, are parents, educators, and youth development practitioners aware of how to guide young people to scaffold their qualifications to improve employability?

## Success is key

Children who attended the Beaufort West Municipality workshops (including those in Merweville and Murraysburg) are focussed on the attainment of success in their future. They consider factors such as a professional job, material wealth and

being able to travel as indicators for future success. They believe they will be free of worry, perhaps because their childhood is so overshadowed by worries. Even their success is tainted with the stories of the lack of wellbeing of their extended families and whether they will be able to provide for them.

The success children dream of seems to be an antidote to the harsh realities in which they live. They would like to be able to rise above these circumstances. Some realise the only way to do that is to become educated or for you to get paid for a sporting or art talent. Their dreams of future success also seem to be fuelled by the desperation of parents and their expectations of school-going children to rescue the family from their dire straits. Dreaming of success is a coping mechanism for the present.

*We require much more guidance and support in helping children understand their own potential and aptitudes.*



### Activity 3: Recommendations to the Government

Children were requested to make recommendations to the government for service improvements. Recommendations focus on the four (4) mandate departments of the Commissioner i.e. Departments of Social Development (DSD), Health (DoH), Education (WCED) as well as Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS). For the DoH and DSD, the recommendations are presented according to common themes. This gives the Departments an overview of the key issues at a community level, which is appropriate since DSD and DOH programmes and interventions are community-based. Whereas for WCED and DCAS, the recommendations are presented at the school level. This owes to the nature of WCED and DCAS interventions, which are site-specific.

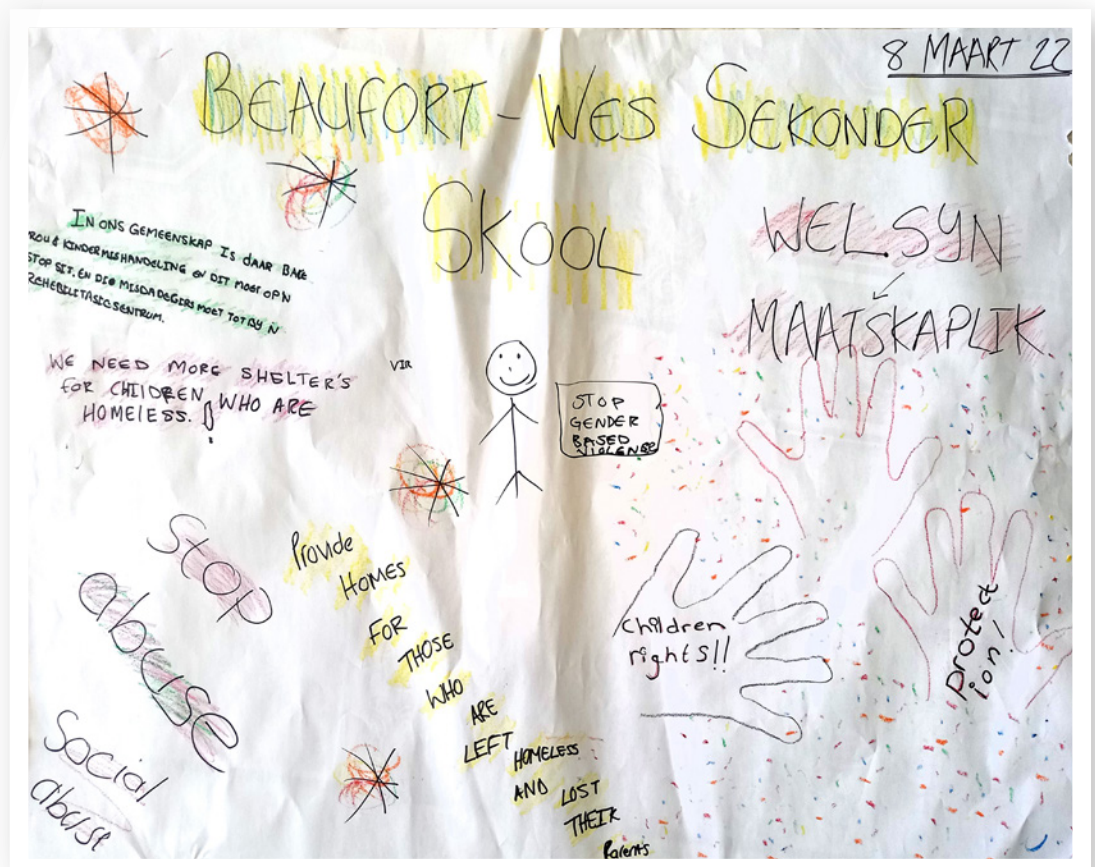
A high-level analysis of these recommendations is discussed below and a detailed table of children's submissions to the WCCC are provided in Appendix 1.

#### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The children in Murraysburg depicted their recommendations for DSD in posters. The primary request was for more "welfare offices (welsyn kantore)." The reasons the children provided were: "There are many children without parents in Murraysburg" and "To help many people with their struggles" (*Daar is baie kinders sonder ouers in Murraysburg [en] om baie van die mense te help en hulle te help met hul omstandighede*).



Department of Social  
Development







Children at Hoërskool Sentraal in Beaufort West, considered a DSD priority to be: “Helping homeless children.”

Some Mandlenkosi High School children highlighted the issue of “foster care and homeless children”. They claimed: “Every homeless kid has the right to a shelter. The government needs to provide food and clothing for those in need. Kids who are in abusive families deserve to be taken to foster care. The reason for foster care is to protect children from abusive families so they do not end up on the streets or end up taking substance abuse.”

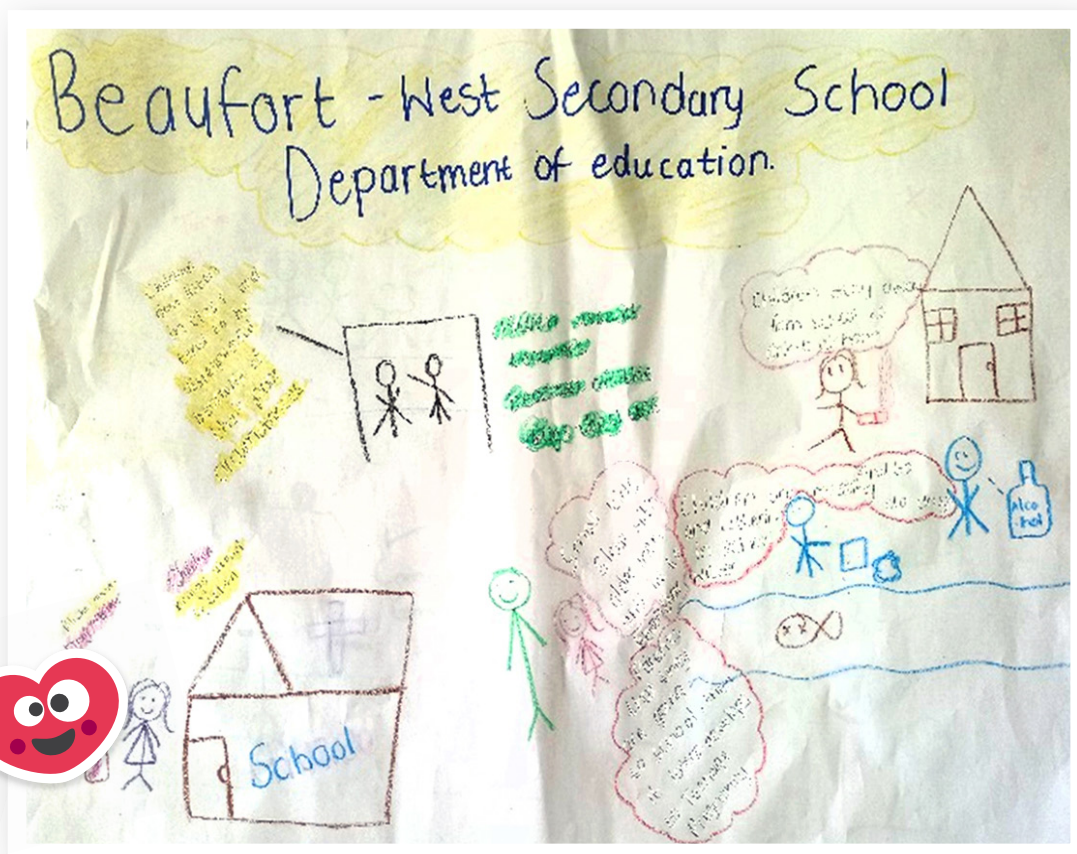
The Molo Songololo’s Its your Move children group were concerned about substance use and abuse. They shared that bars are selling alcohol to young people without verifying their age with an identity document. Their recommendation for this issue is more awareness campaigns about the dangers of substances as well as more drug and alcohol abuse centres.

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Children in Murraysburg are concerned about environmental health. They said: “The environment must be clean. Our community is dirty, and it can cause illnesses. We need more garbage bins, and this can have a bad effect on health.” (*Die omgewing moet teen [alle tye] skoon [wees]. Want ons gemeenskap is vuil, onse mense kan siek word. Ons het nie genoeg dromme om ons vullis in te gooi dit kano ons gesondheid verswak.*)

The children at Hoërskool Sentraal in Beaufort West requested: “Clinics in every area, [and] better services, [as well as] make clinics and hospitals more accessible.” They also advocated for sexual and reproductive health rights: “Improve sanitary methods in toilets (girls), make boys aware of sex and not just girls, [and] give our more condoms and pads.”

*Children in Murraysburg are concerned about environmental health. They said: “The environment must be clean. Our community is dirty, and it can cause illness.”*



In addition to facilities being more resourced and “accessible in every area”, the children at Mandlenkosi Secondary School implored: “Health workers must keep a patient’s information private [and] have patience.” The children are of the opinion that: “The clinics don’t take care of children positively when they are sick.”

Murraysburg children request “more educators” (*meer onderwysers*). They understand the value of education is “to alleviate unemployment” (*dit sal die gemeenskap so baie help met werkloosheid*). However, we hear once again of educators still implementing corporal punishment, they say: “Teachers must not hit us” and “the teacher hits us” (*Onderwysers mag ons kinders nie slaan nie. [en] Die juffrou slaan ons.*)

At Hoërskool Sentraal the children provided recommendations for school sports. They requested: “Include soccer, basketball, swimming [and] volleyball” They also motivated for E-sport: “Include gaming as a sport”. Children wanted to participate in sport on weekends, they proposed: “Every second weekend we should have a sports day.” (*Elke tweede naweek’n sports dag*). Learners recommended the following improvements at their school: “More subjects, better textbooks, and proper teaching”. They also promoted “mental health [services] at schools.”

“Education is a department that takes care of children’s future”, children at Mandlenkosi High Schools commented. They said they “like” school because: “They are feeding us, they are giving us free books, [and] they are giving us free knowledge.” They would “like to change” the following at their school: “We want them to stop making us clean the toilets:



they should stop making us kneel down on our knees; when we do something wrong, teachers chase us out of the classroom; [and] we do not agree with detention being until 17:00.” (*Kufuneka bayeke ukusigugisa ngamadolo phantsi. Xa senze into erongo mabayeke ukusigxotha. Idetention asivumelani nayo ephela ngo 17:00.*)

Another theme that emerged from children at Mandlenkosi Secondary School was physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The children reported violence within the student body, they expressed: “Stop bullying / hitting us at school !!! by students.” Further serious concerns were shared about the conduct of educators, they shared: “Teachers must stop raping children. Teachers must stop teasing and body shaming us in classrooms. Our bodies are just as perfect as we think they are. We are unique!”

The children of Molo Songololo’s *It’s your Move* raised many concerns including

bullying, peer pressure, self-esteem and suicidal issues, children in possession of weapons at school, and violence by teachers and learners. Children also reported bullying by educators which affects children’s self-confidence. In addition, overcrowded classrooms were also an issue. The Molo Songololo’s *It’s your Move* children’s group advocated for the need for permanent social workers at schools, and for strengthened security at schools.

## DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPORT

The Murrasyburg community appreciated local activities. The children encouraged: “All the traditional activities will be good for our development and bodies.” (*Al die inheemse aktiwiteite sal goed wees vir die liggaam*). Children also promoted cooperation with organising group activities in the community, they opined: “The community must host

*The children of Molo Songololo’s It’s your Move raised many concerns including bullying, peer pressure, self-esteem and suicidal issues, children in possession of weapons at school, and violence by teachers and learners.*



Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, Beaufort West

Children's provisioning rights could be improved by having more facilities, more learning options, and better educators.

more activities outside of school, for all who want to participate" and "people can form groups for those who want to participate". (*Die omgewing moet meer buite skool aktiwiteite hou...vir ander wat wil deelneem, [en] mense kan groepies maak van die wat graag wil deelneem*).

Children at Hoërskool Sentraal called for the appreciation of all South African Languages. They articulated: "Respect other's cultures, because I am because you are" (*Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*).

Mandlenkosi High School children commented on the contributions of culture and sport to their town of Beaufort West. They said: "traditional dance [and]

Imbeleko is not done in Beaufort West." (Imbeleko was explained by a child as "a ritual your biological father is obliged to do for you at his hometown. To show that he and his family as well as his ancestors accept or reject you. Not doing this could result in bad luck or closed doors for that child.") The children also commented: "They don't do all sports, there are no swimming sections, [and] there are no netball tournaments." They do not see some positives with respect to cultural practices and sport. Children advised: "They do Imbeleko, they apologies to the ancestors, [and] they do respect traditional wedding[s]." As for sports, the children reported: "They do netball and soccer, they do challenges [between] teams, and they do athletics.] It is difficult to conclude whether the children are speaking about sports at school or in their community, as these are often conflated.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT FROM CHILDREN

DSD is requested to provide more offices, homeless shelters, and good alternative care options. DoH is urged to prioritise increasing the number of health facilities. There are dignity violations that need to be addressed by WCED such as continued corporal and humiliating punishment including children cleaning toilets. The mental health of learners is also a grave concern. Children's provisioning rights could be improved by having more facilities, more learning options, and better educators. There is a sincere appreciation by the children in Beaufort West for the promotion of sport and culture in their communities. It was hard to link their recommendations directly to DCAS programmes.





## Insights and recommendations to departments from adult stakeholders

The WCCC engages child rights duty bearers in every community visit. In Beaufort West, the Commissioner had the opportunity to engage with social workers, health care practitioners, NGO staff and parents. The discussions were aimed at understanding key challenges faced by these duty bearers as well as their recommendations for government departments. This section presents these findings thematically according to the department.

### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The WCCC met with DSD officials, and NGO staff from Badisa and National Association of Child Care Workers who shared their experiences of providing child protection services.

### Lack of parental involvement

In the meeting with DSD and Badisa service providers were concerned about children's behavior. The officials spoke about children not being children anymore and complained about the lack of discipline displayed by children. They shared that discipline could involve taking away children's privileges such as cell phones. Of grave concern was the lack of parental involvement they witnessed in their communities. They reiterated the need for children to have boundaries and for parents, the first duty bearers of child rights, to fulfil their parental responsibilities. DSD tried to preserve the family structure by providing programmes that promote preservation and awareness. However, some of these programmes did not have an impact or buy-in from the community. The need for prevention interventions was strongly supported and recommended.

*The WCCC engages child rights duty bearers in every community visit. In Beaufort West, the Commissioner had the opportunity to engage with social workers, health care practitioners, NGO staff and parents.*



*The Commissioner met with DSD officials, and NGO staff from Badisa and NACCW.*

*“Working in this community I’ve noticed that there is a lot of substance abuse, particularly alcohol abuse but there aren’t any rehabilitation centres available to people in the community.”*



Social Workers

For example, NACCW in Murraysburg provided parenting workshops for their clients, but parents are not interested in attending. The Commissioner emphasised that parenting attitudes and behaviours are informed by parents’ own upbringing – realising child rights is a matter of changing hearts and minds, which is not easy to do.

### Access to resources

Both Badisa and DSD officials agree that there was a lack of rehabilitation facilities for children. Children are either placed in Outeniekwa secure care Child and Youth Care Centre – CYCCs (for males, in George) or Vredelus secure care Child and Youth Care Centre (for females, in Cape Town). It was reported that when children return from CYCCs there are no schools such as Further Education and Training institutions which discourages the children to proceed with the skills learnt from the CYCCs. This was echoed by a social worker working for Molo Songolo “Working in this community I’ve noticed that there is a lot of substance abuse, particularly alcohol abuse but there aren’t any rehabilitation centres available to people in the community. I think the nearest one is in Oudtshoorn or George and people have to travel with their own money to get to Oudtshoorn or George

to be admitted and that is financially quite difficult for a lot of people. So, I would like to know if it is possible for a rehabilitation centre to be established in Beaufort West or in the Central Karoo. It would make it a lot easier for people who want to be rehabilitated to travel there.”

### Staff wellness

Staff debriefing was a regular occurrence in DSD and Badisa. Sometimes counseling was required. It was reported that the government’s contract with Metropolitan (the government wellness service provider) allows for 8 sessions per year. However, this is not nearly enough to help social workers cope with the trauma they encounter in their work. A probation officer suggested having a mentor to help with wellness may be beneficial. The Commissioner emphasised the need for service professionals to create their own culture of wellness in their workplaces in addition to regular professional debriefing.

### Professionalism

In addition, the issues of professionalism and the relationship with child clients were also raised. Sometimes there are difficulties with connecting with children as they have been previously disappointed by other social workers. This is also







Child Rights Sector

related to the high turnover of staff. The importance of professional behaviour was raised. One attendee said: “What I want to bring across is professionalism. We must learn to redefine our concepts so that we can start believing in reinforcing them positively. It’s very much important for our sanity and also for the benefit of our clients. The fact that you are dressed in a certain way doesn’t necessarily mean that you are professional, but the way you conduct yourself that is [important]”. This official brought across the point that dressing professionally does not mean that you are professional. One still must be cognisant of the way in which you treat your clients, especially children, to make them feel safe and comfortable.

In addition, stakeholders who met with the Commissioner in a meeting with Molo Songologo *It’s your Move* reflected on the conflict between social workers and the police as these professionals

sometimes interpret laws differently. It was also reported that social workers are persuading people to become safety parents. This may be due to the lack of places of safety for children, which in turn puts pressure on social workers to find suitable accommodation for children. NACCW staff also reported that while some DSD social workers have a good relationship with NACCW, there are some who undermine Child and Youth Care Workers.

### **Dedicated service providers**

In Murraysburg, NACCW provides a basket of services that includes child protection services, youth development and disability services. The staff at NACCW have a clear love and passion for serving children. For example, in Murraysburg NACCW staff play an invaluable role in their communities as Child and Youth Care Workers conduct home visits from 06:30am to check that

*Sometimes there are difficulties with connecting with children as they have been previously disappointed by other social workers. The importance of professional behaviour was raised.*

*Despite the difficulties of working within a resource-constrained environment, child protection professionals remain positive and give their all to their work.*

children have eaten and are dressed for school. Sometimes these CYCW work after hours to support children in Murraysburg. The Commissioner warned staff about the dangers of working 24 hours and burnout.

It was evident that while social workers have a passion to serve children and families, they encounter various challenges in fulfilling their duties ranging from the involvement of parents to constraints within the system. Despite the difficulties of working within a resource-constrained environment, child protection professionals remain positive and give their all to their work, as one DSD official said “*what keeps me going, what keeps my light burning is my positivity. And positive thinking starts with me as a social worker*”. Social workers emphasised the importance of social workers “*we are the preservers in the community*”, but “*We are social workers, not miracle workers*”.



## Western Cape Education Department

### CASE STUDY ON CRAWFORD SCHOOL

A grandmother who is the primary caregiver for her grandchildren shared a positive review of Crawford school.

*“Look I am involved at Crawford School — I brag about that! They take us as parents by the hand, but it depends on you as a parent, it’s the involvement. Many times, parents are begged to come [to school]. My grandchild is in Grade R and just yesterday I saw again on the class group, the teacher said ‘please parents send your children to school. Don’t keep them at home’. If the child is maybe hungry, there is food at school. So, they also can’t say that there’s no food, the child is not going to school. Even my daughter tells me, ‘My Ma musn’t make cereal. I eat at school.’ They take the food to the smaller classes. So, there is no way they can say that a child misses out because he must stand in a line. So, it is just that the parent must be involved.”*

She also reflected how teachers use WhatsApp groups to communicate with parents. She says “At this school [Crawford], they give their cooperation and they have that thing — you are on a [WhatsApp] group — your class. So, if there are any problems then we talk about it on the phone or come in Ms X let us talk about what happened”. This grandmother was satisfied with how teachers communicate with parents and their passion for ensuring that children receive their education.





“Die Wit Olifant”

## CONCERN FOR LEARNERS’ ABILITIES TO COPE AT SCHOOL

There were concerns about the level of children’s education. Specifically, the practice of promoting children to the next grade without them having the capacity to manage in the higher grade contributes to learners dropping out of school. The professionals in attendance advocated for career guidance for children as this is needed to help children with career decision-making. Staff at NACCW indicated that their organisation wanted to do a session on career guidance at the high school in Murraysburg but this was not allowed. They also expressed their concerns for Gr 8, 9 and 10 learners who struggle to read. They reported to the Commissioner that they would like to support these learners at the high school, but their programme has been “blocked” by certain individuals.

## SPECIAL NEEDS AND SCHOOL OF SKILLS

Parents in Beaufort West are interested in a school of skills but there is no movement from the Department of Education although a site has been identified and is referred to as “Die Wit Olifant”. Apparently, the R51m building remains vacant with no

signs of progress. The Commissioner was taken to the site, which has a big building, with lots of space, but is non-functional.

There were allegations of fraud hindering the operationalisation of the building/school in the municipality. There is a big plea from professionals across the board for special needs facilities in Beaufort West. A mental health nurse said *“I work with a lot of different issues in my capacity as mental health nurse. In this time I’ve come to realise that we need a special skills school for children with intellectual disabilities in our district, as well as we have so many supposed street children that do not have a place of safety to go to or even a skills school where they can go to during the day if they do not fit into mainstream schools. So ja that’s my suggestion.”*

## PREVENTION PROGRAMMES FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN

The principal at Beaufort West was a visionary woman who was dearly loved by her learners for her caring and listening nature. In her discussions with the Commissioner, she spoke about the substance abuse problems in their community and emphasised the need for



*There were concerns about the level of children’s education. Specifically, the practice of promoting children to the next grade without them having the capacity to manage in the higher grade.*

The  
Commissioner  
with the Principal  
of Beaufort  
Wes Sekondêre  
Skool



*Children face  
various challenges  
in their homes  
and communities  
and have a lack  
of positive role  
models in their  
environments.*

prevention interventions that would help at-risk children in the longer term.

## Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport

### ETHOS OF CARE

The Mass participation; Opportunity and access; Development and growth (MOD) programme offers creative arts (dance, drama, and music) and sport. The team shared their passion and love for working with children, which were evident in their enthusiasm and the way in which they spoke about serving children. They acknowledged the benefits of this programme for children. Children face various challenges in their homes and communities and have a lack of positive role models in their environments. They shared that some children come from broken homes and the MOD programme is a safe space for these children to develop positively. The team reflected on their good relationships with the children attending their programmes by sharing

fond memories of children. The MOD ethos is different from education as they provide supplemental services and focus on whole child development and gaps in safety nets.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

The team noted that Central Karoo does not have an arts and culture body/federation and that opportunities for creative arts are sorely needed. They reflected that programme implementation models change too frequently, which is normal as programmes require refinery in order to meet its objectives.

The MOD coaches often spot children at risk or those experiencing abuse. One MOD coach was in tears as she recounted an experience of identifying and trying to assist a child in an abusive environment and the trauma of the child's story still affects her today. A strong referral system is needed to ensure that at risk children get the help that they need, and a strategy for staff wellness.

## Department of Health

The Commissioner visited the local clinic in Beaufort West. The clinic offers the standard primary health care services including a well-baby clinic, dental care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and sexual and reproductive health. A parent viewed the services of the clinic positively *“ons kry baie goeie diens want jy kan jou kinders bring en as jy n probleem het kan jy met die sisters kom praat en vir hulle raad vra rondom die sekere situasie. [We get very good service because you can bring your children if you have a problem you can talk to the sisters and ask them [advice] about the situation.”*

### SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

A mobile clinic is taken to primary school to provide HPV vaccines. The health official reflected that not all schools are very open to family planning. However, outreach to schools is done and adolescents can receive birth control as needed. The clinic allows teens to

walk-in or make an appointment. Teen pregnancies and relationships between adult men and young girls are a problem in the area; sometimes the age gap in these adult-child relationships is between six to seven years. Social workers then discover that some parents are aware of these relationships but allowed it due to vulnerable circumstances. The health promoter at the clinic always encourages young girls to continue with their schooling after giving birth.

### Summary of recommendations

- Investment in primary prevention programmes for family preservation and substance abuse is especially needed for children and families.
- More rehabilitation facilities are needed in the Central Karoo district.
- Available resources within communities must be used to benefit children's education.
- Schools of skills are in demand as learners are struggling to cope in mainstream classrooms.

*Investment in primary prevention programmes for family preservation and substance abuse is especially needed for children and families.*



*The Commissioner and team met with the MOD team at A.H. Barnard*



## Analysis of recommendations

### ROLE OF ADULT DUTY BEARERS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

Parents are the first legal duty bearers of children. Parenting in South Africa is hard. Poverty and unemployment are two factors which make parenting even more stressful than it already is amid a global pandemic. Parents are simply trying to survive. However, there are parents with serious addictions which affects their parenting capacity. The involvement of parents in children's education impacts on their academic development and achievements. The key question is, what is needed to enhance parenting capacity to realise child rights?

We are living in a society where dysfunction in families and communities is normal. The government is then expected to step in to support children, but the harsh reality is that the demand for child protection services outweighs the capacity to provide good quality services. The child protection system is at breaking point and so is the wellbeing of these service providers who are tasked to support vulnerable children. Adults in society, whether they are parents or the government, must fulfill their duty to realise child rights.

*Parenting in South Africa is hard. Poverty and unemployment are two factors which make parenting even more stressful than it already is amid a global pandemic. Parents are simply trying to survive.*

### CARE FOR THE CARER

Time and again we recognise trauma lingering in frontline staff when they speak about the challenging environment in which they work. The high caseload carried by social workers, especially the NGO social workers in small towns, is detrimental to their wellbeing. Great expectations fall upon the small number of social workers who encounter trauma almost daily which ultimately results in burnout. The social workers rightfully said that they are not miracle workers. In addition, employees of the MOD programme deserve more support for wellbeing as they are working daily on the frontline with vulnerable children. They play an invaluable role in society engaging children in positive activities which could broaden their horizons. A culture of wellness must be a priority in all departments, organisations, and offices. Working with children requires well-balanced, healthy adults.

### SCARCITY OF SORELY NEEDED RESOURCES

The scarcity of technical and vocational schools in the district was highlighted by service providers across departments and organisations we engaged. The lack of options for children results in stressed children struggling in school and increasing the dropout rate. This has a negative effect on the country's future as these children will one day have to enter the job market.

In addition, the need for prevention and early intervention programmes continues to be a serious issue. We need to invest more in these programmes to minimise risk factors for children.



## Conclusion

The Beaufort West Community Child Rights Workshop report is the fifth in the series. It comes after the Bitou-focused report. In the Bitou report, the conclusion is much more high level than reflecting on the contents of the workshop itself. Therefore, this Beaufort West report takes ruminations further, building on previous arguments.

It has become evident that the themes across municipalities are very similar throughout the province. Children's reports of dangerous places focus on illicit activities and safe places are generally service sites. Dreams focus on escaping poverty by becoming rich and famous, but children worry about whether they will ever attain these aspirations. They always recommend that adult duty bearers take their responsibilities to achieve child rights, more seriously.

It is becoming clearer that society is not prioritising the realisation of child rights. Children can point to many failures that leave them unprotected, lacking basic provisions to grow, and being ignored and not allowed to participate in governance.

The Office of the Commissioner for Children has prioritised understanding and helping to stabilise the child protection system in the province. The Commissioner addresses these gaps in service provision, that children point out, with the heads of government departments, compelling them to respond. This feedback from the government is taken back to the children in the communities where workshops are conducted. They have another opportunity to decide whether they are satisfied that their rights are being fulfilled to the maximum extent possible within the available resources of the government. When they disagree

with the government, then Commissioner has the power to address an advisory to government departments.

This advisory will be compiled when all 6 regions and the city has been reviewed. Child Government Monitors, who are nominated from these Community Child Rights Workshops or who self-select, work with the Commissioner to further advocate and lobby for child rights realisation. They do this by making policy, law and practice reform submissions to the decision-makers. Hereby, children are participating in governance. The Commissioner is also building the capacity of Child Government Monitors to monitor government budgets for child rights alignment.

The child participation strategies of the Commissioner for Children are yielding some success with children reportedly feeling more confident and included in the change in their society.

*It is becoming clearer that society is not prioritising the realisation of child rights. Children can point to many failures that leave them unprotected, lacking basic provisions to grow, and being ignored and not allowed to participate in governance.*



## APPENDIX

SCHOOL	DCAS SUBMISSION	TRANSLATION	CATEGORY OF SUBMISSION
<b>Mandlenkosi Secondary School</b>	Culture is very important, and it must be respected	N/A	comment
	You need to keep your body fit by doing exercise and it is also important for your health	N/A	comment
	We need basketball and cricket	N/A	recommendation
<b>Beaufort-Wes Sekondêre</b>	Mense moet nie skaam wees oor hul kultuur nie	People should not be ashamed of their culture	comment
	Ons hou van netball speel and sport doen	We like to play netball and do sports	comment
<b>Murraysburg Hoërskool</b>	Murraysburg is not only a place where South Africans live, Chinese and Indians also live here	N/A	comment
	The sports we play are tennis, soccer, netball and rugby	N/A	comment
<b>Bastiaanse Sekondêre Skool</b>	mense moet nie beoordeel nie	people should not judge	comment
	Mense moet Godsdien	People need Religion	comment
	'n hookiebaan te bou om vir kinders te help te speel	building a hockey court to help children play	recommendation
	Mense moet nie beoordeel oor hulle kultuur nie	People should not be judged on their culture	comment
	mense moet mekaar die selfde behandel	people should treat each other the same	comment
	Mense of kinders moet meer deelneem aan sport	People or children should participate more in sports	comment
	Hulle moet meer bolle and softbolle speel	They should play more bowls and softballs	comment
<b>Hoërskool Sentraal</b>	Swimming, volleyball, Basketball, soccer	N/A	comment
	include soccer, volleyball, swimming and gaming	N/A	recommendation
	elke tweede naweek n sports day	every second weekend a sports day	recommendation



SCHOOL	DSD SUBMISSION	TRANSLATION	CATEGORY OF SUBMISSION
Hoërskool Sentraal	Helping homeless children	N/A	Comment
Beaufort-Wes Sekondeer	Make lives better for children	N/A	recommendation
	Together we can save lives	N/A	Comment
Mandlenkosi Secondary	The Department of Social Development must keep children safe	N/A	recommendation
	They must protect children	N/A	recommendation
	They must protect the children that have no parents	N/A	recommendation
	All children must be safe and protected	N/A	recommendation
	Every homeless kid has a right to have a shelter	N/A	Comment
	The government needs to provide food and clothing for those in need	N/A	recommendation
	Kids who are in abusive families deserve to be taken to a foster care	N/A	recommendation
	The reason for foster care is to protect children from abusive families so that they do not end up on the streets or end up taking substances	N/A	Comment
Murraysburg Hoërskool	Meer kinders se ouers gee nie om nie	More children's parents don't care	Comment
	stop the abuse, never hit kids	N/A	Comment
	Mens kan ook na die Isibindi mense toe gaan	One can also go to the Isibindi people	comment
	Die welsyn sit naby die swembad	The welfare (department) sits near the swimming bath	comment
	Some children don't go to school because their parents are alcoholics	N/A	issue
	The people are struggling	N/A	issue
	The children skip school	N/A	issue
	there are many children on our streets who are homeless	N/A	issue
	Meer kinds lei aan die abuse van volwasse mense in die gemeenskap	Children are abused by adults in the community.	Issue
Bastiaanse Sekonder	We hope that you create more homes for homeless children	N/A	recommendation
	We hope that there will be less need for welfare for children	N/A	comment

SCHOOL	WCED SUBMISSION	TRANSLATION	CATEGORY OF SUBMISSION
Hoërskool Sentraal	More subjects	N/A	recommendation
	Better textbooks and proper teaching	N/A	recommendation
Beaufort Wes	Ons skool is baie te koort aan veiligheid	Our school is very short on security	issue
	Dat die skoolhoofde die skole moet reg beheer	That the principals must manage the schools properly	recommendation
	We want more classes; I feel like it is too unfair to have a few classes. We need more. We are a big number of children at Beaufort Wes	N/A	recommendation
	Ons sit met gedrags probleme by verskillende skole	We have behavioral problems at different schools	issue
	Ontwerp meer vakke	Design more subjects	recommendation
	Children don't listen in class and tend to be disrespectful because of their poor circumstances	N/A	issue
	Children bring alcohol to school	N/A	issue
	Children assault teachers because of the drugs they use	N/A	issue
	Small kids sleep with older men and lie to their parents that they are going to school, then it later develops into teenage pregnancy	N/A	issue
	Children are messing and littering in school	N/A	issue
	Children stay away from school to drink alcohol	N/A	issue
	We want more safety at the school	N/A	recommendation
Murraysburg Hoërskool	In Murraysburg they treat us well. I hope it stays like that.	N/A	comment
	Education is the only key to life	N/A	comment
	There is no violence	N/A	comment
	Om kinders to help moet one hulle bemoedig om skool te loop	To help children one must encourage them to go to school	comment
Mandlenkosi	We want them to stop making us clean the toilets	N/A	recommendation
	They are feeding us	N/A	comment
	They are giving us free books	N/A	comment
	They are giving us free knowledge	N/A	comment
	Stop hitting us and bullying us at school	N/A	issue
	Teachers should stop raping children	N/A	issue
	Teachers must stop teasing and body shaming us in classrooms	N/A	issue
	Our bodies are just as perfect as we think we are	N/A	comment
	No bullying at school	N/A	comment
Bastiaanse	Die onderwysers moet ophou die kinders slaan	The teachers should stop hitting the children	recommendation
	Daar moet order en discipline wees in ons skool	There must be order and discipline in our school	recommendation
	Die leerders moet die onderwysers respekteer	The learners must respect the teachers	comment
	Daar moet aktiwiteite wees om kinders besig te hou en uit die moeilikheid bly	There must be activities to keep children busy and out of trouble	comment
	Die skool gronde moet netjies skoon gehou word	The school grounds must be kept neat and clean	recommendation
	Die leerders moet respekt het vir mekaar	The learners must have respect for each other	comment

SCHOOL	DOHW SUBMISSION	TRANSLATION	CATEGORY OF SUBMISSION
Hoërskool Sentraal	Improve sanitary methods in toilets	N/A	recommendation
	Make boys aware about sex, not just girls	N/A	recommendation
	Make clinics and hospitals more accessible	N/A	recommendation
	Mental health in schools	N/A	recommendation
	Give out more condoms and pads	N/A	recommendation
	Clinics in every area	N/A	recommendation
Mandlenkosi Secondary School	The clinics don't have enough medical services for the sick people in the community	N/A	issue
	The hospitals don't have a lot of ambulances	N/A	issue
	The hospitals don't have a lot of medical rooms	N/A	issue
	Every area should have an easily accessible clinic or hospital	N/A	recommendation
	Healthcare workers must have patience	N/A	recommendation
	Healthcare workers must keep patient information private	N/A	recommendation
	The clinics don't take care of children positively when they are sick	N/A	issue
Beaufort-Wes Sekonder Skool	Make life for children better	N/A	comment
	Must get more doctors to help children faster	N/A	recommendation
	Die Department van Gesondheid moet meer aandag geer aan die hospitale wat slegte diens lewer	The Department of Health should pay more attention to the hospitals that provide bad service	recommendation
	Baie siek pasiente wat moet behandel word sterf want die dokters gie nie aandag aan hulle pasiente nie	Many sick patients who need to be treated die because doctors do not pay attention to their patients	issue
	Mense moet goed behandel word in hospitale en moet gesond raak nie meer nog sieker nie	People should be treated well in hospitals and should get well not sicker	comment
Murraysburg Hoërskool	We need more services for family planning education	N/A	recommendation
	you must eat healthy	N/A	comment
	we need more knowledge	N/A	comment
	the hospital is there to take care of people who are sick	N/A	comment
	We need more protection for women and children	N/A	recommendation



SCHOOL	DOHW SUBMISSION	TRANSLATION	CATEGORY OF SUBMISSION
Bastiaanse Sekonder	Hulle kan meer hospitale bou en meer hulp versaf vir mense wat nie die geld het om te betaal nie	They can build more hospitals and provide more aid to people who don't have the money to pay	recommendation
	hulle kan ook meer kinderspitale aan bou	they can also build more children's hospitals	recommendation
	Die Department van Gesondheid verskaf dienste and voerte vir mense wat ongesond is en wat hulp nodig het	The Department of Health provides services and food for people who are unhealthy and need help	comment
	Hulle moet jonger mense kry om die pasiente vinniger te help	They need to get younger people to help the patients faster	recommendation
	Ons hospitale moet meerder kamers kry. Ons het baie siek en oumense wat moer daar wees	Our hospitals need more rooms. We have a lot of sick and old people who need to be there	recommendation
	Baie dokter doen baie goeie werk en maak ons mense baie gelukkig	Many doctors do very good work and make our people very happy	comment
	Soms is hulle ook baie stadig met noodsake	Sometimes they are also very slow with emergencies	issue
	En soms is hulle baie vinnig met nooievalle	And sometimes they are very quick with emergencies	comment
	Hulle sien baie uit laat ons gesond is	They are very much looking forward to us being healthy	comment

# Notes

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**Commissioner  
for Children**  
OF THE WESTERN CAPE

**#littlevoicesMUSTcount  
#kleinstemmetjiesMOETsaakmaak  
#amazwiamancinciMAKAVAKALE**