

REPORT OF THE
CHILDREN'S CONSULTATIVE
FORUM 2019

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ACRONYMS

CCF - CHILDREN'S CONSULTATIVE FORUM

DCPC - DISTRICT CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

DSP - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

MCCNT - MARANG CHILD CARE NETWORK TRUST

MLG&RD - MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

NCC - NATIONAL CHILDREN'S COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the proceedings of the fourth Children's Consultative Forum held at Maun Lodge by the Department of Social Protection (DSP), under the Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development, in collaboration with Marang Child Care Network Trust (MCCNT), their organizing partner for this event. It was a four-day event running from 3-6 December 2019.

The Forum brought together 146 children from different parts of the country, from both rural and urban backgrounds, ranging from the age of 9 to 18 years old, who came to have their voices heard on issues affecting children in Botswana, and who came to share experiences from their different communities and how they affect their overall well being. Each District delegation was accompanied by two Chaperones, being a Teacher and a Social Worker from the same district.

Held once every two years, the Forum enables children to learn from each other in terms of issues and challenges faced by the different communities represented and how they manage to deal with them. More importantly, it is the perfect platform for them to express their views as children and bring forward issues that they think should be addressed by Government for their benefit. Therefore it enables the active participation of children in matters of policy formulation on issues that promote child survival, development and protection.

The 2019 Children's Consultative Forum had the following objectives:

1. To elect a new National Chairperson and Deputy National Chairperson who would lead the 2019 Children's Consultative Forum.
2. To orientate members of the Children's Consultative Forum on their mandate: roles and duties.
3. To capacitate members of the Children's Consultative Forum to be able to work with District and National Structures in order to fulfill their mandate.
4. To capacitate members of the Children's Consultative Forum on leadership and advocacy skills
5. To review progress made since the last forum, held in 2017.

FORUM APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

Unlike the previous meetings, this year's Forum was structured to run over four days, incorporating a member orientation element that was not done before, and this has enabled newly elected members to leave the event fully appreciative of their roles and what was expected of them as members.

The program consisted of an opening session on the first day, which alongside the keynote address by the Minister of Local Government & Rural Development, basically introduced the Forum to the members; what it was about and how it came about. It also included feedback from the outgoing committees, in terms of what they had achieved, the challenges they had faced and what needed to be done, and this set the tone for the rest of the event going forward.

The second day was about campaigning and electing new leadership of the Forum. This included appreciating the election process and utilizing it to choose a capable leader of the Forum; the National Chairperson and National Vice Chairperson. Chosen district leaders campaigned for the position of National Chairperson, which would be taken by the candidate with the most votes, and the runner up named Vice Chairperson.

The third and fourth day spanned a variety of presentations by different stakeholder organizations playing a key role in the area of child welfare, giving members an idea of all the resources available to them at national and community level, which they can use to carry out their mandate; and how to use them.

Each day started with a prayers and housekeeping announcements, and ended with a prayer. The sessions were each chaired by an outgoing chairperson and an adult, and questions and comments were allowed after every presentation, with team building exercises between sessions to keep the energy alive. Both Setswana and English were used throughout the event. Proceedings were recorded through audio and photography.

BACKGROUND

The Children's Consultative Forum was established by Section 34 of the Children's Act of 2009 to provide meaningful opportunities for the children of Botswana to influence key processes that affect them. The Forum is composed of children from all the 16 Districts in Botswana and serves as an advisory body to Government on issues of children's education, health, safety and other issues of general well being of children in Botswana. The Forum meets to express views and opinions of children in relation to the issues that they experience first-hand in their different constituencies and makes recommendations to the National Children's Council.

After the Children's Act of 2009 was passed as a law, the first National Children's Consultative Forum was held in August 2010 and elected its first National Chairperson and Vice Chairperson who would serve for a term of two years, at which end another election would be held for new representatives. Since this forum, others were held in 2012, 2014, and 2017. The 2019 forum, held from 3 to 6 December in Maun, was therefore the fifth of its kind.

Membership of the Forum is 160 children, being 10 child delegates representing each of the 16 districts of Botswana. This is as specified by the Second Schedule of the Children's Act, under Composition of the Forum. The representatives from each district are selected through the local district councils, who also facilitate the forum activities at district level. As much as possible the selection process is as inclusive as possible, to represent a wide spectrum of issues faced by children; including children with disabilities, orphans, out of school children, children from disadvantaged communities as well as children in institutional care. Adequate representation of both boys and girls is also quite important in the selection.

The 10 children selected to attend the Forum from each district, make up the District Committee. It is through this committee that many children's voices are heard, as the committee goes about addressing issues that are peculiar to their communities, and seek to find solutions to address them.

FORUM WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

PRE-FORUM PREPARATIONS

With the experience of running the last four forum meetings, the organizing committee realized the need to prepare the child delegates ahead of the forum, to ensure smooth and timely proceedings, as well as to ensure the proper care of children while in their custody. While the child delegates were generally well behaved and obedient during attendance of the workshop, there tended to be isolated incidents of unruly and unbecoming behavior amongst the children.

For this reason, the pre-forum session was set up to ensure that children understood ahead of the workshop what was expected of them while in attendance, in terms of behavior and general conduct. The pre-forum session took place on the day of arrival, the night before the opening session of the forum. In this session, the organizing committee, in collaboration with the children's Chaperones, shared with the children the code of conduct or behavior expected from them.

There were rules regarding responsibility in utilizing the accommodation and conference facilities availed by the accommodation provider, in this case Maun Lodge, which the children were expected to abide by. The children got to understand the conduct expected from them around other guests at the hotel, and the need to let their Chaperone know immediately if they had any complaints or problems regarding the accommodation.

They were also informed about what to expect during the workshop, in term of activities that they needed to prepare themselves for e.g. dressing appropriately for campaign and elections, as well as the need to select their district chairperson ahead of the elections, as he or she would be the one campaigning for the elections.

OPENING SESSION - DAY ONE

The very first session of the Forum was chaired by outgoing Chairperson of the Lobatse District, Miss Lone Tshubang, along with Ms Malebogo Modiakgotla of the Department of Social Protection.

The newly appointed Minister of Local Government & Rural Development, Hon. Eric Molale, was expected to officially open the event in the early morning session of the first day of the Forum, but he was unable to as he had been pulled in for another opening engagement at that time, therefore the announcement was made that he would instead attend the afternoon session to officiate.

Session One of the first day started with an opening prayer by Pastor B.M. Nthobatsang, who shared a scripture before prayer with the gathering (Genesis 3: 19) and urged the delegates to focus on their studies and work very hard to enjoy the fruits of their own labor.

Ms Malebogo Modiakgotla introduced a few key stakeholders present that the children needed to be aware of, noting the presence of the Director of the Department of Social Protection (DSP), Mr. Hamilton Mogatusi, and the Director of Marang Child Care Network Trust (MCCNT), Ms Kgomotso Nana Sejoe, who came with her team. She also acknowledged the presence of the children's Chaperones: a Social Worker and a Teacher from each district who came accompanying the children. Also present was the Public Relations Unit of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, joined by the Public Relations Unit of the North East District Council.

Mrs. Kenaleone Ramoroka of the Department of Social Protection addressed any housekeeping matters that needed attention before making a roll call to ensure that all the children whose names had been forwarded by the districts were indeed present at the Forum.

REPORT BACK BY THE 2017 DISTRICT COMMITTEES

Districts were given the opportunity to share their experiences from the last Children's Consultative Forum of 2017, and show how much it had worked for them at district level, and to bring up any challenges they had met. The reports were presented by leaders of the district committees.

Ghanzi District

Outgoing Chairperson of Ghanzi District, Joyce Makaikai, shared some of the challenges that they had, which hindered their progress as a district. She mentioned that the biggest challenge was lack of communication between members of the Committee and with the Social Workers. As members of the committee lived long distances away from each other i.e. some lived in Ghanzi, others in Charleshill etc. it was very hard to communicate with each other and to set up committee meetings. Another issue they had was lack of resources like transport, which also made it impossible for members to meet.

Southern District

Bontle Morake, outgoing Chairperson of Southern District reported that they had started off with great plans for the children in her district, and had wanted to tackle the problems we that affected children in their area. Teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and child neglect were seen as the main problems, so as a way to eliminate these problems they decided to encourage behavior change in children by disseminating information to children in schools, which they managed to do.

She said that the challenge they had was that there was no cooperation between the committee and the Social Work Department in charge of their activities. Therefore, as Chairperson she looked for two motivators, one from Botho University and another from University of Botswana. Their role was to address students on issues of substance abuse and teenage pregnancy, and they managed to address students at Morama Junior School. This worked out because afterwards they learned that when the school's exam results came they had four A's for the first time in decades, and the first time in the school to get 4 A's, showing that the group addressed had really received the message, and this translated into a success for their Committee.

Francistown

The outgoing Vice Chairperson of the Francistown Committee, Kitso Makhumalo, had a lot to share about their activities. She felt that their tenure had been successful and thanked their coordinator, Ms Marape, for support in achieving their goals, and said she had managed to advise them through any challenges they faced.

One of the things they managed to do was introduce the committee to other children in schools. As they had committee members in different schools, they sent them to schools to be able to talk about the committee and its mandate, mostly at assembly on Fridays. They also used this opportunity to address issues that affect children in Francistown like teenage pregnancy, which was a very big problem in their area.

The Committee also attended District Child Protection Committee meetings, where they were able to express their views pertaining to children that needed the other stakeholders attention or intervention. They utilized the June 16 and the International Day of Disability events to address children in their city. During the June 16 event, they also managed to raise funds and donated sanitary pads to Centre for the Deaf.

She shared that In 2017, the Committee was not able to campaign the national seat as they had a car accident on the way to the Children's Forum even. She expressed appreciation to the Director of Social Protection, who came to comfort them at the time of the accident, and to the City of Francistown for providing psychosocial therapy to the Committee during the traumatic experience.

The Committee had two members with disability, one visually impaired and another hearing impaired. They managed to get along with and communicate with them, sharing experiences amongst them. Kitso said that children with disabilities faced challenges as there was a communication barrier against them, and they were not normally included in other children's activities, therefore it was a rewarding

experience for other children in the Committee to have them as members, because they got to share experiences amongst them and help each other with solutions..

In closing she expressed appreciation for the opportunity they got as a Committee, which enabled them to contribute to the lives of children in their area.

North West District

Acting for outgoing Chairperson of the North West District, Gosegonna Tlale said that the Children's Consultative Forum has helped them a lot as a Committee because they had learned a lot from being members, and that though they had challenges they just decided to just push forward with their plans. She reported that they managed to give motivational talks to children during the June 16 event, and that they also managed to address the issue of child neglect through kgotla meetings. The challenges they had regarded cooperation and communication with the Social Workers and transport, because as members they were coming from different parts of the district, and it was hard to meet due to the lack of resources. Also due to other duties at the Council, the Social Workers were not able to facilitate Committee activities.

South East District

Theophillus Pheto, Outgoing Chairperson of South East District, shared the success of being able to talk to children about the Children's Forum. Most of them did not even know that the Forum existed, or what it does, so they were able to share that information. Even organizations that they sought assistance from about the activity were not aware of the Forum, so it was discouraging. He suggested finding ways to let people know, both young and old, that the forum exists as it would help a lot in carrying out their mandate.

He stated that their biggest challenge was the flow of information, as there was no real structure for them to pass information from the Committee to the Social Workers, so a lot of their plans never got to see the light of day.

He shared that, apart from the challenges, being a member of the forum for the past two years had been a very uplifting experience and had given them the opportunity to step out of themselves and become leaders of other children.

Jwaneng District

From their experience, the Jwaneng Committee instead came up with recommendations for the Forum, as presented by Mothata Tlhobogang, Acting Chairperson of Jwaneng. He called for the Department of Social Protection to familiarize themselves with all district plans and review them periodically (quarterly) to ensure that they are on track. He also requested that some of the more prevalent children's issues be rolled out as national issues, such as child trafficking, saying that if any one child was affected, then all children would be affected. He reminded that such issues were already regulated

by laws and policies, therefore this was the right time to fight for their decline, quoting #EsengMoNgwaneng.

Kgatleng District

Lemogang Tshukudi, Outgoing Chairperson of Kgatleng District reported that they were not able to achieve all their objectives as a result of lack of communication amongst the committee...

Kgalagadi District

The Outgoing Chairperson of Kgalagadi District, Lefika Ethusang, said his committee had managed to live up to most of the commitments they had made in their plan. The first problem they wanted to tackle was teenage pregnancy, for which they formed clubs in which teenage mothers were sharing with other students the consequences of teenage pregnancy. They established two clubs which were currently active in Lehutsele and Lopang JSS.

They also had the problem of truancy or absenteeism from school, so they carried out home visits and taught parents about the importance of their active participation in their children's education. Home visits were done in Zutshwa and Inalegolo, which had a lot of truancy. While in the villages they managed to gather some issues that were raised by children about why they were absent from schools.

The Committee also addressed the issue of Child negligence in kgotla meetings and managed to teach people about the consequences of child negligence on children. At his closing he expressed his pride at the success of his Committee in honoring the commitments they had made.

Lobatse District

Lone Tshubang represented Lobatse District as its Outgoing Chairperson, and she reported that they managed to only achieve part of the plans they had made as a Committee, due to the challenges that they faced. They utilized the June 16 commemoration to educate children on issues affecting them, like teenage pregnancy and drug abuse.

As a Committee they also made a suggestion that the Guidance and Counseling lesson in schools should not only be about teaching but be an engagement between teacher and students. According to their suggestion, the Guidance teacher would simply bring up a topic and the children would engage with it and explore it. She expressed the hope that their Guidance teacher would take up the suggestion and relay it to the relevant authority.

The challenges that they came across included a lack of knowledge and awareness about the Children's Consultative Forum (CCF). They realized that a lot of people in their community did not know what CCF was, so there was still a long way to go in educating children about it. Apart from that, organizations that they went to seek assistance from to carry out some of their plans were not aware of its existence. The Committee therefore, recommended that more effort be made towards educating the nation about CCF.

Lone said the biggest challenge that they faced was the lack of cooperation between the Social Workers and the Committee, as well as lack of resources. This became more evident when they came back from the 2018 Orientation Meeting in Mahalapye; they expected to be called in by the Social Workers and be told what they were expected to do, but that never happened. Whenever the Committee expressed concern about not having started their assignment, they would be told that there was no time to attend to the Committee, that they were running around attending to other Council programs, and that there were no resources or funds that would enable the Committee to carry out activities. For this reason, she recommend that the Department of Social Protection should commit to invest more on the Forum because it is what will move them forward as children.

She also suggested that there should be an evaluation of this conference, and expressed that meeting a full year after election, as it is normally done, does not work for them as children. For this reason, she suggested that instead the CCF should meet every three to six months to ensure that the people assigned to help them at the Councils actually do so.

RESPONSE FROM THE SOCIAL WORKERS

Ms Social Worker from Southern District, acknowledged the children's complaints about lack of communication between District Forum members and their Social Workers, and said that it was true that most of the time Social Workers were unable to keep up with the demands of the Forum activities at the districts due to the massive workload that they had to contend with, because every program developed for the districts was brought to their office for implementation. She said it became hard for them to always be available when the Forum members wanted to set up a meeting, and most of the time they could only find time on weekends, which is also their only free time in the week, or during the children's school holidays. She said in most Councils it was difficult to get permission from superiors to work on the weekends. She urged the Department of Social Protection to give them the support they need with their superiors, because as Social Workers they fully understand the importance of implementing Forum activities. She said Council Management needed to realize the benefit of building up the Forum through implementation, and for this reason DSP needed to step in and support them.

Ms Molebi Balebemang from Central District added that they had an even worse predicament at her district, particularly as it is very large and the ten children in the District Forum literally come from different villages in different sub-districts, to enable full representation. Bringing in a child from Bobirwa, and from Tutume, and from Palapye, for example, to come for a meeting in one place was not easy. She said this was a great concern for them as a district. She added that the issue of taking children out of classes to go for meetings was also not very practical, and stressed the lack of support from the management as an impediment, even though they were willing to do the work. She said they were committed to finding a solution for the children, but they needed the Council Management to support them.

DAY ONE PRESENTATIONS

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL AGENDA FOR CHILDREN, MS MALEBOGO MODIAKGOTLA, DSP

Ms Malebogo Modiakgotla made the children aware that policies addressing issues of child protection in Botswana were not based on Botswana law alone, but were also the result of regional and international instruments and agreements that Botswana as a country had agreed to be a part of, in order to provide premium care for its children.

She let the children know that the country needed to align itself with several global agendas, giving an example of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and said her presentation would help them know where they fit into the global picture. She said that the country committed itself to these agendas so that it can be able to enhance the protection of children in Botswana, and that working with external bodies enabled learning from them and enhancing what was already available.

She started by talking about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which she said was created in order to specify the rights of children across the world. It was specifically created for children, therefore it was important for the Forum members to familiarize themselves with it and understand how its contents affect them as representatives of children.

Next she spoke about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and particularly talked about SDG1, SDG2, SDG 3 and SDG 16. **SDG 1 No Poverty:** She told them that SDG1 is about ending poverty in all its forms, and that as representatives when making their district plans, they needed to identify their community and ask themselves where all the other children were, what environment they were living in within the community, how they could help as their leaders. **SDG 2 End Hunger:** She stressed that no child should be left behind, living in hunger while others lived in abundance. This is where child representatives needed to be aware of the situations in their area and work closely with relevant bodies to ensure that all children were catered for. **SDG 3: Healthy Lives:** She shared that this SDG talked about ensuring healthy lives of all children in their area. **SDG 16 Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions:** Ms Modiakgotla said this one was about peace and inclusive societies. It promoted total inclusion of children in everything. She said that the Forum was one way of including children in activities carried out by adults in the country. It was about ensuring that the child be seen and heard, so they could be part of legal issues in their own country.

Ms Modiakgotla also went on to talk about the agenda that Africa specifically created for its children at continental level: the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), created through the African Union (AU). Along with it, the AU also created Agenda 2040, which was adapted from Agenda 2063, as they saw the need for a child specific one to have achieved in the area of child protection. She informed the Forum members that when a country signs any instrument alongside other countries, then it had the obligation to ensure that all the country laws were aligned to obey the rules of the instrument that was signed. For this reason the Children's Act 2009 had tried to bring all these agendas together, focusing on the Motswana Child. Apart from this, regionally Botswana belonged to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which for its part established the Minimun

Package of Services for OVC. It targeted all children in the region, and covered education and vocational training, food security and nutrition, good health, youth and child safety, psychological and social well-being, as well as sound social protection. In closing she urged the children to be aware of all laws and policies, not only in the country but around Botswana, and be informed as Botswana children.

CHILD PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES, MS GOMOLEMO RASESIGO, UNICEF

In her presentation, Ms Gomolemo Rasesigo, gave a clear picture of what child participation is, why it is important and how it benefits both the children and their country. In her description, she said child participation is whereby children are provided with spaces and platforms to be able to participate effectively and meaningfully in matters that affect them. Children were brought together in these spaces so that their views can be heard about every issue that affected them. She added that child participation covered different areas that affect children, not just one; and included issues at schools, families, communities, also involving government policies and legal policies, and sought to find ways to ensure that children's voices can be heard.

She shared that the United Nations defined child participation as a process for child development that provides an opportunity for children to be involved in decision making. Through child participation, countries were basically asking for children to be present in the process and to engage them in decision making particularly on issues that affect their lives. She said child participation recognized that children were not just powerless people waiting for decisions to be made for them, or merely passive individuals in the communities, but they were actually people that could make a difference if they were engaged in a meaningful and constructive way.

Breaking it down further, she said child participation could also be seen as seeking information, forming views and expressing ideas, or as taking part in activities and processes, or being informed and consulted in decision making. It could also be seen as analyzing situations and making choices.

Ms Rasesigo outlined the four basic principles of child participation which needed to be observed when involving children in decision making, and went on to explain why child participation was important. She informed the children that children were entitled to the same fundamental rights of every human being in the planet. They had the same rights as adults, so their rights had to be protected and not taken for granted. She said that participation was also necessary to fulfill the country's legal obligation to other regional and international treaties that it signed. It also improved the services provided for children, particularly as adults tended to believe that they knew what children wanted or needed, and developed products and services for children without involving them. Lastly, when children were engaged, it developed their life skills and empowered them to make decisions for themselves. Children became better informed and were able to articulate themselves, improving communication with the adults.

She cautioned that child participation did not involve suggesting to children what they should think or say, or using children to do adults work. Instead, child participation involved recognizing the value of children's opinions and views, sharing experiences and expertise with children.

She outlined the rules that apply in relation to child participation. There should be informed consent, access to information, mutual respect, confidentiality, and feedback were key ingredients in child participation. Children had to be in a protected environment and there should be equal rights to participate, a supportive atmosphere, avoiding dependency. Appropriate methods needed to be used for participation. A selection process had to be carried out, of which children to participate, and there had to be language considerations. She went on to list areas where there were opportunities for child participation, mentioning the home, the schools, in the community, in research and advocacy issues, in policy and in law. She added that in the media, children's views also needed to be taken into consideration. Speaking particularly about the home she urged that when decisions were made at home, parents needed to sit down with the children and explain what needed to be done and why, underlining that children should form part of the decision making processes in the home. 'We must teach our children how we do things at home, so that they would know when and how to make decisions, therefore it always starts with the family', she said.

In closing, Ms Rasesigo said that while children had the right to participate and were provided with platforms to express their views, they also had responsibilities to maintain. Firstly, they needed to have respect for parents, superiors and elders at all times and assist them where possible. They also had to work towards the unity of the family, using their skills and understanding to promote peace and harmony in the home. Children must serve the national community by placing their physical and intellectual abilities at its service, because what they learned at forums like this one could be used to bring change and development throughout the nation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS, MR. GUYLORD K. RALOKWAE, INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION (IEC)

Mr. Ralokwae spoke to the children about democracy and the process of voting in elections. This gave the children an idea of how people get elected into parliament positions, what is expected of them and the people that elect them, and this helped them understand the importance of their role as members of the Children's Consultative Forum.

He started by giving a brief history of elections in Botswana since it gained independence in 1966, and inherited the electoral system with its independence, saying that from 1965 to 1986 the elections were run by the Permanent Secretary to the President. After this was reviewed, a Supervisor of Elections was appointed to take over the role until 1997, when the Independent Electoral Commission was established by Section 65A of the Botswana Constitution, and has since been running the elections. He said the legal framework governing elections in Botswana was guided by the Constitution of Botswana; the Electoral Act, which outlined all of the country's electoral procedures and processes; as well as the Local Government Act, which outlines procedures governing local authority.

He told the children that elections take place every five years, and proceeded to take them through the complete electoral process. He started with the pre-electoral period, which starts two to three years before elections, and involved planning for the next elections, training electoral staff, civic and voter education, and registration of voters for the next elections. This is when candidates and their parties developed their manifestos, reached out to the people in their constituencies to vote for them through campaigns and rallies. They had to encourage people to register to ensure that they can vote, because one cannot vote if they are not registered. He said in order to register, a person must be a Botswana citizen, must be 18 years old or more and must have a valid National Identity Card (OMang). He added that a person could only register in the constituency or polling district where he or she originated from, like place of birth, where he or she ordinarily resided or where they were employed from.

The next stage he described, is the electoral period, when elections take place. During this period there was nomination by parties, of who would represent them in each area. Political candidates were trained on the electoral process, along with those who would be running the poll stations. Civic and voter education also continued, and planning, this time setting up polling stations and distributing ballot papers to reach every polling area where Batswana were, including to overseas stations. He shared how Batswana living outside the country got to vote, how different categories of people voted; like police, polling officers, the candidates etc. He also explained how voting was carried out, how the votes were counted and how the results were communicated to the candidates and to the voters. He also mentioned that people come from international bodies to come and observe if the elections in a country were carried out fairly and freely.

In the post elections period, he explained, the elections were evaluated to see if they were free, and if they were carried out fairly. Different stakeholders were consulted to see if there were any changes or amendments to be made in the process going forward. Strategy planning was also carried out after elections.

At the end of his presentation he informed the children that voting was very important because it got people involved in decision making, and the will of the people was expressed. It strengthened democracy and with the right candidates, developments were able to take place, stressing that people must vote for someone whom they believed would bring change to their area. He said that people had an obligation to vote in national elections, as one vote made a difference. He closed by saying that every Motswana had the right to vote and the responsibility to exercise the right.

SESSION TWO - DAY ONE

This session was chaired by outgoing Chairperson of Ghanzi, Miss Joyce Makaikai, along with the Director of Social Protection, Mr. Hamilton Mogatusi.

WELCOME REMARKS BY DEPUTY DISTRICT COMMISSIONER, MR. R GABOREKWE

The Deputy District Commissioner welcomed participants to his District and thanked the organizers for selecting Maun to host the event. He noted that child welfare was a very high priority for Botswana as a country, and said that was why in Setswana culture a child's uncle and aunt were seen as an extension of the parents, and were available for the child to approach if they needed help.

He urged the children to pay attention to what they would learn at this event, and then go and use it in their own district to improve the lives of children in their area. He also urged good behavior amongst the children, saying that he was certain that they were brought up well in their homes and must use that good behavior while at this forum.

He provided a few safety tips for the Forum attendants: to drink lots of water as the heat in Maun was not like anywhere else in the country. He warned that Malaria is very common in this area, and the children needed to take it seriously and report any sign of illness on their part. He told the members not to be discouraged about the current shortage of water in Maun as it came and went occasionally but it always came back. He also cautioned against the use of the swimming pool as it could cost children their lives. Lastly he thanked the organizers for putting the event together as he knew it was not an easy task to do.

ADDRESS BY OUTGOING NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON, MISS LONE TSHUBANG

In her speech, the outgoing National Chairperson of the Forum, Miss Lone Tshubang welcomed those who had managed to attend and be part of the Children's Consultative Forum. She noted that one of the theme hash tags used at this Forum was **#Ngwana Pele- My Life Matters**, and said that it should be taken as a goal and shared by everybody as it called for the empowerment of children, adding that children should be protected and placed at the forefront of everything.

She shared that she lived by the expression **MyLifeMyResponsibility** and said no policy maker would take the children seriously if they did not show any sense of responsibility. "If we want to create the Botswana we want, then we should be ready to be responsible," she said.

Miss Lone Tshubang said that in order to create a promising future for children as a country, there needed to be full inclusion of children, access to quality education, and to give children of minority communities an opportunity to enjoy their culture. "It all begins with us as children to push policy makers to include us in everything that concerns us, and I always say '**nothing for us without us**'.

She added however, that as much as Government was doing all it could to protect children's rights, a lot still needed to be done. She cited the education sector, which did not fully cater for children who were physically challenged, as facilities available were not able to support them. She also said that as much as

the Children's Consultative Forum enabled them to exercise their right to freedom of expression, it was a concern to find that bodies like the National Children's Council continue to represent children without their presence, and suggested that the National Chairperson of the Children's Consultative Forum should at least be part of the Committee. She ended her speech with **#MyResponsibility+MyRights=MyFuture**, and said it was completely up to the children to determine the future that they want and that is promising for all children.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS by MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT & RURAL DEVELOPMENT, Hon. ERIC MOTHIBI MOLALE

The Minister started his speech by apologizing for attending the event late in the day, as he had other commitments to attend to. He said that as the future of the country, the children had to learn to define their own destiny; and it all started at this tender age. He decided to remind them of a few known local proverbs that guided the upbringing of a child, asking the children to first list any that they were aware of which were related to children. The children came up with the following proverbs:

Botlhale jwa phala bo tswa phalaneng.

Lore lo ojwa lo sale metse.

Moremogolo go betlwa wa taola wa motho oa ipetla.

Ngwana yo o sa utlweng molao wa batsadi o utlwa wa manong.

Morogo wa ngwana ga tlhotshwe ditlhokwa.

He said that the proverbs clearly showed that to every parent, the life and upbringing of a child was very important, and had to be carried out diligently to mold him or her into a well rounded individual. There were those that guided how a child should be brought up, giving an example of the proverb '*Lore lo ojwa lo sale metse.*' He explained that *lore* was a stick or a rod that you crafted and bent while in its moist state to mold it into how straight you want it to be. The same applied to children; you had to build them up and mold them while in their raw and flexible state of childhood and turn them into a better individual, to also protect him or her from any future hardships that could be caused by unmolded behavior.

He concluded that the Setswana culture had always held a very important role for children, not just to be brought up, but to partake in the affairs of the household. He said it was forbidden for someone to be found mistreating children or doing unpleasant things to them, and the proverbs were an example of how much children were loved and treasured. Children were meant to be brought up in a way that would benefit them in their future, and even though this was never quite written down on paper but passed by word of mouth, the practice achieved its goal. He said things were a lot better these days as there were already laws specifically written to protect children, mentioning the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child (UNCRC), which had been domesticated into the Children's Act. He

said now these instruments were available, they enhanced the care of children, ensuring that the child was protected, had a good upbringing and received everything that was necessary in their childhood, like health, education, nutrition, hygiene so that he or she can grow up to be a well rounded individual.

He told the children a bit about himself and how he came to be involved in children's issues, sharing that the first ever commemoration of the Day of the African Child in Botswana in 1993/94 was hosted by him as the District Commissioner of Tsabong. He had volunteered his district to host the event, which was premised on the 1976 uprisings of Soweto on June 16. As he came from the border village of Phitshane Molopo, where during the June 16 uprising, the people that fled from South Africa at the time, ended up on the border villages in his area, and the residents there ended up providing them with shelter, so he understood what the commemoration signified. Later, as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, The Masiela Trust Fund was formed under his support, working under his former Minister at the time, Ms Margaret Nasha. They had both come across some disturbing cases, such as whereby a 9 year old was left in charge of his siblings after the parents passed on, with no support from the relatives. This prompted them to act quickly to ratify and domesticate the UNCRC in an effort to ensure that children were protected, particularly orphaned children who tended to be left out by their relatives.

He expressed happiness at seeing how far they had come, to the point that they were now able to consult with children at this Forum, saying that the UNCRC, the Children's Act, and other structures were formed so that children could be part of the democratic process. He noted that the event program included a presentation from the Parliament Office, and the Electoral Commission to school the children on the necessary processes so they could know how in the future to become a member of parliament and where it all starts. He added that the children were expected to take such things seriously and go and utilize the knowledge at their districts. He asked the children to agree with him in his presence, that the District Forums were going to be fully functional after this Forum, better than before, with his support.

He repeated the proverb '*Botlhale jwa phala bo tswa phalaneng*,' saying that as adults they had done all they could to ensure a better life and opportunities for the children, it was now their time to use what they have learned to advise the adults going forward. He reminded them of Pastor Nthobatsang's words earlier, that they must learn while in their youth to be able to meet any hurdles in future with confidence. He had also said that everyone survived on the fruits of his or her own labour, so they needed to work hard for their livelihood, especially as there were already laws and statutes that would support them.

In closing he said, 'There are others your age who have had a tough life story but survived. As LEADERS of those children you can even do much better so that we jointly improve on the lives of children in Botswana. That is the purpose of this forum and this convention,' before requesting that he be given the resolutions of the Forum at the end, and what plans they had made to improve the lives of children in Botswana going forward.

VOTE OF THANKS BY MISS GOSEGONNA TLALE, CHAIRPERSON OF NORTH WEST

Gosegonna Tlale thanked the Minister for his presence at the Forum, and also thanked all those who were present, including the children. She introduced herself as a young lady aspiring to be a medical doctor, with future aspirations of being in Cabinet as the Minister of Basic Education.

She started by appreciating the words of Pastor B.M. Nthobatsang, when he said that it takes a community to raise a child, saying that what it meant to her was that anyone older than you is your parent. The Pastor spoke a lot about the importance of education, and she agreed with him, saying that a child who took their education seriously would be the pride of his or her parents.

She appreciated that they were given the opportunity to talk about the successes and challenges they had encountered as district members, and acknowledged the words of the Social Workers who spoke about the challenges they faced in facilitating their activities, saying that they understood as children that they were also people, and expressed the hope things would be different with the next committees.

She thanked the presenters of the day for the way they had opened their minds to issues of child participation, elections and the different global agendas, saying it would really help them in the future and in carrying out their mandate. She also gave special thanks to the Outgoing National Chairperson of the Children's Forum, Lone Tshubang, and thanked her for her address, saying she would also continue to say #MyResponsibility+MyRights=MyFuture.

SESSION ONE- DAY TWO

The first session on the second day was chaired by outgoing Chairperson of the Selebi Phikwe, Miss Goitsemodimo Gabaikangwe, along with Mr. Galisano Tshiamo of Chobe District

DAY TWO PRESENTATIONS

UPDATE ON PROGRAMMING AND POLICY ISSUES FOR CHILDREN OF BOTSWANA BY MR. MOFFAT NKGARI OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

When he began his presentation, Mr. Nkgari reminded the children about the global instruments that Ms Modiakgotla had spoken about in her presentation, saying that as they were already covered he would skip them from his presentation. He informed them that his presentation was to make them aware of all programs that were developed for children in Botswana.

He told them that as the Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development they developed programs for children, along with other Ministries like Education, Health, Transport, Civil & National Registration, Police, Prisons, Botswana Defence Force and the Ministry of Agriculture, who also had programs that addressed children. He said the programs developed looked at the family setting rather than the child as an individual because he or she was part of a unit.

The children were informed that there were a number of laws which guided the Ministry in developing programs. He listed the following laws and explained what they do as he went along: Constitution of Botswana; Children's Act; Public Health Act; Adoption Act; Births and Deaths Registration Act; Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Circumcision Act; Wills Act; Customary Law; Marriage Act; Pension Law; Refugee Act and the Law of Succession. As he explained the laws he urged the children to pay attention and note them down as they would need to share this information with the children in their districts.

He went on to share with them other programs that were developed to cater for children under the Destitute Policy. He named the Orphan Care Program, which basically catered for children who had lost their parents, and provided them with food, clothing, school uniform, and toiletry. He also shared the other programs like Psycho Social Support Program, Foster Care & Adoption and Institutional Care. He said the Rural Area Development Program (RADP) catered for children living in remote areas where essential services were very limited, and told members of the Forum that these were the children that they should really speak up for to ensure that they are given access to supplies and services. He also explained the Poverty Eradication Program, Early Childhood Development Program, Maternal Child Health Program. At the end he spoke about the Special Dispensation Program for Tertiary Education, targeting children who had completed their Form Five but had scored below cut off points (under 36 points). He said his Ministry had an agreement with the Ministry of Education to assist children from remote areas or those living with disability to acquire sponsorship to Tertiary Schools if they had scored between 31 -35 points. He urged the children to take this knowledge to their communities for sharing.

Mr. Nkgari ended his presentation by talking about the periodic review of programs and laws under his ministry to ensure that they were still relevant. He said the Adoption Act was currently under review as

it was very old and was losing relevance. The Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Policy was currently being developed and was near completion. Lastly, he said the Ministry also assessed the Situation of Children in Botswana every ten years, and he announced that they had recently launched the latest Situation Analysis on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, and it was available for sharing.

QUESTIONS

1. As there is a Boys' Prison in Moshupa, is there also a prison for girls?
 - There is no girl's prison, just a Women's Prison.
2. If a parent is taken to prison and you go into Foster Care, are you forced to go back and live with the parent when he or she comes out?
 - If a parent goes to prison, the child remains with the extended family. If there is no extended family then the child is taken into Foster Care.

OVERVIEW OF THE ELECTION PROCESS BY MS KENALEONE RAMOROKA, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Ms Ramoroka took the children through Sections of the Children's Act that addressed the Children's Consultative Forum. She elaborated on the functions of the Forum, making them aware that they were all members of the Forum, and they had been selected from their districts to come and represent other children in Botswana, therefore the functions as started in the act applied to them. As the Forum they would be discussing all the issues specified: education, health, safety etc. on behalf of other children in Botswana, giving the example of those coming from North West: that they were there to represent the children of North West, therefore they needed to open their eyes to the issues affecting children in their region, and find ways to address them and find solutions.

Explaining the Composition of the Forum she showed them that each of the districts had brought 10 children along who made up the District Forum, joined by their outgoing chairperson to make it 11 people. She said the tenure of office meant that all those selected would be members of the Forum for two years, and their term would end in 2021, adding that they were allowed to continue for another term afterwards if they were still under the age of 18. She briefly explained how they were expected to behave as members of the Forum, saying Ms Kgomotso Sejoe of Marang Child Care Network would speak more about this in detail later in her presentation.

ELECTIONS

She informed the children that they all needed to decide about who they wanted to lead them as the National Chairperson and National Vice Chairperson of the Children's Consultative Forum, and this would be done in the form of elections. She explained that all the District Chairpersons would come forward and campaign for the position, and all members of the Forum would decide by voting. She gave them 30 minutes to go and sit with their district teams and prepare for the candidacy. The district Chairpersons would come up to the front one by one and speak about what they were going to do for the Forum, or why they were the best candidate to select as National Chairperson.

The children came back and made their campaign speeches at the podium. The staff of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) then explained to the children the process that they would follow to carry out a vote, and two areas in the room were selected and designated as polling stations. The names of all the candidates were listed clearly at both polling stations. Each voter was to write the name of the candidate chosen on a piece of paper and drop it in the ballot paper provided. The ballot papers were counted at the end of the vote. The two ballot boxes were emptied in front of all, and counted. There were one hundred and forty seven (147) ballot papers in total, and the following was the result of the vote:

VOTING RESULTS

NAME OF CANDIDATE	DISTRICT	NUMBER OF VOTES
McKennedy Kgosiemang	KWENENG	4
Comfort Rungwa	CHOBE	5
Otilia Morewane	SOWA	5
Karabo Ramokhutshwane	LOBATSE	7
Khumo Monato	SOUTHERN	7
Lorato Rebaone	KGATLENG	8
Opang Reakae	SOUTH EAST	9
Kgotla Molubi	GABORONE	9
Wazha Mkhutshwa	FRANCISTOWN	10
Theo Tida	JWANENG	10
Lefika Kgadisa	KGALAGADI	11
Tlhabologo Kodie	GHANZI	11
Gosegonna Tlale	NORTH WEST	12
Khumo Mmalane (Vice Chairperson)	CENTRAL	13
Annalisa Cruikshank (Chairperson)	SELEBI-PHIKWE	14
	SPOILED VOTE	2
	TOTAL	147

HANDOVER SPEECH BY MISS LONE TSHUBANG, OUTGOING NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON CCF

As she stepped onto the podium to speak, the outgoing National Chairperson, Lone Tshubang, called for a round of applause for the newly elected Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. She expressed appreciation for the privilege of being elected Chairperson in 2017, and congratulated Annalisa Cruikshank for being elected the new National Chairperson.

She reported that as the outgoing National Chairperson of the Forum, they had made some major accomplishments, saying that in the past two years For the past two years one of their accomplishments was being able to work with the First Lady and UNICEF to launch the #ESengMoNgwaneng Campaign. She said the campaign was aimed at raising awareness about sexual exploitation in children and it was a great opportunity to see members of the community and different organization working together to combat sexual exploitation for the benefit of children. As children they exercised their right to Freedom of Expression and managed to influence policy making during this campaign. They also managed to do this at the celebration of A Convention of the World's Children on November 20, and said it gave them an opportunity to share substantial issues which affect children with policy makers.

Lone said the real value of the Children's Consultative Forum lay in its members, in their skills, their determination and passion in creating the Botswana that they want. She thanked the board that she had been working with for the past two years, and expressed gratitude to organizations that had been working with them, naming UNICEF, REPSSI and the National Children's Council.

She thanked her family for the continuous support that they gave her, as well as the public at large for supporting her through social media platforms. She expressed good wishes for Annalisa and the new Board, saying it may seem like a large mountain to climb at this time, but it could be a truly fun experience, saying they would learn all the way as they carried out their duties, and assuring them the support of the outgoing Board.

SESSION TWO- DAY TWO

Incoming National Chairperson of the CCF, Miss Annalisa Cruikshank, chaired the session with Mr. Galisano Tshiamo of Chobe District

DAY TWO PRESENTATIONS

GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS OF OPERATION FOR THE CHILDREN'S CONSULTATIVE FORUM (CCF), MS KGOMOTSO NANA SEJOE OF MARANG CHILD CARE NETWORK TRUST

Ms Sejoe started her presentation with a little exercise to energize the children, before presenting on the guidelines of CCF. Her presentation broke down and explained the guidelines of operation for CCF. She said that through her presentation the members would understand how they were going to operate and carry out their mandate when they got back to the districts.

The role of CCF was to mobilize other children, discuss issues affecting them in their area and be able to come up with solutions that they felt could address the issues. She asked the members to group themselves into groups according to where they were sitting, after which they were to come up with themes and cluster the issues identified under them e.g. truancy under education. She asked them to look closely at the themes of Education, Health, Safety and General Wellbeing and decide how they would cluster their issues. She said the exercise would enable them to do the work knowing which direction to take. She reminded them about the role of CCF was, saying that they were the voice of all the children that were not present at the Forum, to speak on their behalf about issues that affect them in their districts.

Ms Sejoe said that through CCF, the children were given the opportunity to be involved in the design, the planning and the implementation of any policy or program that was developed for them. She pointed out that the adults may believe that children needed one thing, while instead they needed something else completely, therefore CCF was created for them to take part in everything that affected them. She said even with the Children's Act, if they noted something while going through it that was not right or needed to be changed, they just needed to let the relevant people know and it could be reviewed or amended. She urged them to speak up if there were any issue of upbringing, or something created for them was not done right.

She expressed that the participation that government was targeting included children holding events at a chosen venue, addressing other children, collecting their views and be able to go to the authorities and voice out issues of concern, or offer solutions to problems in consultation with other children. She told the members that they needed to bear in mind that they were in the Forum to address other children's issues and not their own. She also informed them that after attending Parliament sessions, Ministers went to address kgotla meetings and share with residents what was discussed in Parliament; what laws were passed, what program was created, who did it target etc. Then they would take the views and comments of the residents to see if they understood and were in agreement with the

decisions of Parliament. This is what was expected of the Forum, she said, especially now that the Minister had pledged his support to the Forum.

She made it clear that from there, District reports were expected to be delivered in writing, that there would no longer be just spoken reports. She encouraged that they document everything as they mobilize other children and get their ideas and come to present them at the National Forum. With each activity they should record: take pictures, write minutes, stories and this would enable them to see their own progress and achievements, and it would make writing their report easier. She said the written reports would serve as a reference for the Secretariat, that they would be able to refer back to and say what their board was able to achieve, how they did it and what challenges they faced.

She emphasized the need for good behavior by members as that had an impact on how far they go with the Forum as members. She said unbecoming behavior could get someone removed from the Forum, reminding them of all the addresses they had received about behavior. She cautioned that any activity that the children carried out had to be supported by the Social Workers office; they had to be informed of any activities planned, they had to be involved in all activities; and where a letter needed to be written to an organization or an individual, the Council was the one to write it and sign it. In closing, she urged the children to respect their elders while doing their duty.

SESSION ONE- DAY THREE

THE ROLE OF BOGOSI IN CHILD WELFARE, KGOSI OLEYO LEDIMO, MAUN

Kgosi Oleyo Ledimo schooled the children on the role that community leaders played in the upbringing of a child in Botswana. He painted a picture of how community leadership supported families in molding and building up their children's character to grow up into well rounded and responsible individuals.

Kgosi told the children that community leadership, or *Bogosi*, played a very important role in maintaining the peace and tranquility of communities across the country, where people would live in harmony without any type of crime. This meant also ensuring that children had access to health, education, food and other necessities in their lives. For this reason their first responsibility lay in molding the individual, who would become part of a family, then part of a community. He said that as children, they were going to one day be Teachers, Councillors, even Parliamentarians, and this was the correct time to start guiding and teaching them how to behave.

This had to start from the home: to see how a child was living in the home, who brought them up, what kind of people were bringing him or her up? He said this was where the traditional groups of *Bogwera* and *Bojale* originated; to teach children social values of how to live with people in the community, how one behaves towards a woman or a man, or behaves towards a parent. He said the role of *Bogosi* was therefore to mold an individual to live in harmony with others around him or her.

He said there were however, instances where parents who had difficulty with their child's behaviour would seek the support of *Bogosi* to help them discipline the child. Discipline from *Bogosi* in this case came in either of two ways: they started by speaking to the child trying to make him realize the error of his ways, if it failed, they used the other method of corporal punishment. As *Bogosi* they did not use this method to punish, but rather to try and get the child on the right path. If that failed, they referred the child to other institutions like Childline, or to the Social Workers for further support, whom they regarded as important partners in the upbringing of children in the society. With these collaborations, *Bogosi* generally believed that there was sufficient community support to ensure the raising of a responsible individual who could in future become a leader in Parliament or in Council.

QUESTIONS

1. How long is the stick or rod that a child is punished with?
- The stick is of a very reasonable size. Remember that *Bogosi* exists to ensure well being of the community, so we do not do this to cause harm to a member of our community, just to get them in line.
2. Instead of punishment by a stick why not make the children pay a fine?
- When we consider fining children for misbehaviour we must realize that the same parents are who complained about him will pay the fine for him, where will the child get money from otherwise? We would basically be encouraging the child to misbehave again without facing the consequences!

- Corporal punishment does not kill, it helps. Apart from that, it is not *Bogosi* that came up with this method of punishment; it is Setswana, tradition, the society as a whole that came up with this method and agreed on it as a nation, however, it is *Bogosi* that implements it.

3. If a child is punished through *Bogosi*, and referred to the relevant institutions for further guidance, but still remains the same, what action is taken?
 - If the parents try to mold the child, *Bogosi* tries to mold the child, Social Workers try, Childline tries, and the child grows up but still remains the same, then this child will have chosen his own path that will take him the wrong way. These are the sort of people who will end up in prison, because they have refused to accept guidance from anyone while growing up. They also end up failing to take responsibility of their own children. Those that agree to be guided can end up as leaders; so it is up to the individual to make the choice. As you deal with other children and they take the wrong path, please make them aware of this and help to guide them.
4. I think that *Kgosi* should have thrown that last question back to the members to see what they thought should be done about such a child. (Comment)

THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S COUNCIL (NCC) & LINKAGES WITH CCF, MS LINNY AARON, NCC

Ms Linny Aaron expressed appreciation for *Kgosi* Ledimo's words as she took the podium for her presentation. She made a few comments on *Kgosi's* speech, before she began her presentation.

She informed the children that the Children's Act actually supported the Chief about corporal punishment in Section 90, which states that 'A sentence of corporal punishment shall not be more than six strokes, and shall be inflicted in accordance with Section 305 of the Criminal Procedure & Evidence Act and Section 28 of the Penal Code.' She also quoted Proverbs 13:24, which said 'Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.' She told them that she wanted to support what the Chief said, and ended by telling them that everyone of them was born a leader, that none of them was a mistake; each of them had a divine purpose in life, and the only way to carry out their purpose was to discover who they were at this age.

Starting the presentation, she said that she was a member of the National Children's Council (NCC), but was working for the Attorney General's Chambers as a Legislative Drafter. She took the members through Section 35 of the Children's Act, which talked about establishment of the NCC. She also looked at the functions of the Forum to show how it linked to the Council, 'The Forum shall discuss issues affecting the education, health, safety or general well being of children...' She told them that in order to represent the interests of children in their constituencies, they needed to know what issues they should focus on, which they would then recommend to the Council for action.

Under 'education', she gave an example of when one of the campaigners mentioned the possibility of removing agriculture from the curriculum, and reminded them of their phrase 'For Us Without Us Is Against Us', and said that as leaders their role was to seek opportunities to voice their opinions and their complaints about the issue. They had to sit together and discuss the issue, agree, make a statement and forward it to NCC, which would then take it to the relevant Ministry. She said that if the Ministry did not take it up, then the NCC was empowered to take any other action to ensure the matter was addressed, which included consulting with any other organization like civil society to advocate for action. She also gave further examples of the kind of issues to pursue under health and well being.

She also informed them that the NCC also went through all the laws related to children to ensure that they were child friendly, saying that as children they must always hold Government accountable, and for this reason they needed to be aware of all laws affecting them. She expressed an interest in meeting the children at a gathering like this one and presenting to them on all Botswana laws that affect children. She said they needed to know how each of the laws protected children. She said children were also covered in the Law of Inheritance, the Wills Act and the Marriage Act; and looking at these laws was the role of NCC.

Ms Aaron said one of the Council's roles was to 'advocate for a substantive share of national resources to be allocated to children related initiatives,' and told them about the Appropriation Bill, which was usually released just before the budget speech is compiled. She made them aware that as leaders they should know about it, when it would be released, actively go through it to find out how much was

allocated for health , for example, and how much of it was for children. The Council's responsibility was to look at such issues and advocate where necessary for more resources to be allocated to health or education for children's programs etc.

She informed them that currently the Council functioned as a Board, without its own office or staff like BNYC, or BNSC . They had the hope that one day the Council would be more independent and have its own office and staff who could focus fully on issues of children, but at this point the Children's Act allowed them to do other activities that enabled them to further the interests of children. The Council could act on its own or in association with other bodies who were knowledgeable about relevant issues.

The Forum members needed to keep their eyes open for any issues that needed to be raised affecting children. If their school was rundown, for example, and there were safety issues involved, then they needed to report that as leaders, make recommendations and forward them to the Council. She concluded by saying that the Forum should give the Council work to do, as it existed to serve them.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. **Boitumelo Sephonono, North East:** I heard earlier about spaces allocated for play areas and I want to know more about it. We do not have such play areas in our district, what can we do?
- (Mahama) The District Forum reports to its Social Worker in the Council. The Social Worker reports to the Community Development & Social Welfare Committee, which gives issues priority and makes recommendations for inclusion in budget. If no report is received from the District Forum at all, then the Council structures would not be able to help..
2. **Opang Reakae, South East:** My question is that, when we go out to do what has been explained as our role, sometimes the Council tells us that we are expecting too much and say there is not enough money, or something like that, which is discouraging. What can we do?
3. **Lucia Moabi, South East:** You said when we identify problems that need action we must report and make recommendations to the Council. How do we get hold of you, how does communication work between us (Forum and Council)?
- Through the Ministry responsible for children. The Social Worker in the district receives your reports and makes recommendations to the Department of Social Protection, which then passes it onto the National Children's Council, which then faces the relevant Ministries for action.
4. What Ministry does the Attorney General fall under?
- It falls under the Ministry of Justice, Defense and Security.

**ROLE OF DISTRICT CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEES (DCPC), MS MERIAM D. TSHOSO,
GABORONE CITY COUNCIL**

Ms Tshoso spoke to the Forum members about the role of District Child Protection Committees and how they relate to issues of child welfare. She informed them that every district was expected to have such a committee, and selection of its members had to be done at the local *kgotla* in the presence of the community, and children were part of its composition, reminding them of their declaration of #ForUsWithoutUsAgainstUs. The Committee was expected to have two children as members, a girl and a boy.

She said the main function of the Committee was to reduce any risk that children could be exposed to in the community, therefore children were added as part of the Committee as they were the ones who clearly understood the issues that children faced each day and could articulate them better. The Committee made sure that anything that seemed harmful to children was addressed so that actions could immediately be taken. Another function of the District Child Protection Committee was to protect the rights of children, and ensured that every child in their district got to enjoy his or her rights, like any other child in Botswana. She made the members aware that while they were entitled to rights as children, the rights also came with responsibilities which they were expected to fulfill.

Ms Tshoso said that the Committee was also responsible for teaching the community about issues of child neglect, ill treatment and other harmful behaviors towards the child, that are also against the law. Through this Committee, the children could go and continue with the campaign #ESeng MoNgwaneng, as an example. The Committee also monitors the welfare of children in their respective communities.

She urged them to go back to their communities and ensure they are involved with the Committee, noting that some of the children were already members in their districts. She said the committee fought to ensure that everything in the district that they came from, affecting children, is addressed. If it is something that needs to be ended by law then it is done. If it is something that requires to just be addressed by parents, Social Workers or Community Leaders, then they are involved, for the protection of children.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. What kind of children are elected into the District Child Protection Committee?

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LEADERSHIP AND CHARACTER BUILDING, MS KENTSE MODIKWA, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

When Ms Modikwa started her presentation she asked the children to say what they understood by leadership, and then defined it as where someone stands up and leads people in a path that is acceptable to everyone.

Teaching them about the qualities of a leader, she told them that a leader had to always be responsible, because his or her influence could change a person's life. She said as they became leaders they needed to be able to know when their actions affected someone else, to express themselves without hurting others, and to know what to believe or not to believe. They needed patience, and to know their strengths and weaknesses. and had to learn how to help others whenever they could.

She called on the outgoing chairpersons of districts to share what challenges they had met as leaders and they mentioned the ability to share power with other members, by allowing them to present their own ideas, without insisting that only the leader's ideas matter. The children said that a leader needed people around him or her for support. She told them that one of the most important challenges for a leader was that not everyone would support him and his ideals; and that a leader was the source of support; he listened to and guided other members of his team to succeed.

Along with the children, she named some of the well known child leadership programs that can be found in the different villages like Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and Pathfinder club, saying that they can use these programs to help children in their districts. In closing, she said that a leader was someone who set a good example for others in all aspects of life, and that practicing leadership qualities would help them prepare for tough situations later in life.

QUESTIONS

1. **Prince Motshwarakgole, Kweneng:** A leader can be sacrificial, in that you can put aside what you want for the good of others, that is, putting the needs of the people you lead first. (Comment)
2. **Shirley Ntsepe, Kgatleng:** Even when you meet challenges in life, do not be discouraged; just face them and have the nerve to do what others are afraid to do. (Comment)

SESSION TWO- DAY THREE

SAFE ENVIRONMENTS, MS MALEBOGO MODIAKGOTLA & MS KGOMOTSO SEJOE

Ms Modiakgotla told the children that along with Ms Sejoe, she would present to them about safe environments, which was all about keeping them protected as children wherever they were. She shared that a newspaper article she had read named Botswana as another rape capital, meaning that the environment that they lived in was not so safe anymore.

She told them about the INSPIRE Model, which aimed to end violence against children. It was an acronym that talked about laws, norms & values, safe environments, parents & caregivers, She said it taught about prevention as a way to promote non-violence, because acting after violence takes place meant dealing with consequences. INSPIRE says that the social, economic and cultural environment has the ability to either reduce violence or increase it. She gave an example of villages where child marriage was the norm as one of the cultural practices. She said even the way that we were brought up could also contribute towards an unsafe environment.

QUESTIONS

1. What happens to a child that is found to be living in an environment that is not safe for him?
- (Sejoe) The best thing to do is to let those responsible know, like Social Workers, that the child is living in an unsafe environment, so that they can assess to see how the environment can be improved for his or her benefit. If that is not possible then the child can be removed from that environment to a safer place.
2. Why don't we relocate bars and parks that compromise the safety of children?
- (Sejoe) Mma Mahama has mentioned in her presentation that before a person is awarded a license for a bar, the location is assessed first to ensure it is the appropriate location. In the earlier years that was probably not done, that is why most of the bars are not in good locations; but that is slowly changing. What you can do as leaders and advocates of children is to come up with resolutions and recommendations to say, as children we have realised that bars have been placed where it compromises our safety, therefore we request that something be done about it, for example, where a bar is located near a school.
- Parks were intended to be places where children can go and relax, and play and interact at, but because nowadays they are not well maintained, they tend to attract undesirables or petty thieves, that is where they are found. The FNB Park in Gaborone is one of the more protected and well preserved parks for children. You cannot just bring anything in it that is not child friendly, except maybe when an adult has paid to use it, but still they clean it up afterward back to its preferred state for children.
3. I would like to thank you for this presentation. I now know what to do to make the environment safe for children in Kgalega. (Comment)

4. Drinking is for people over 18 years, yet we come across underage children drinking in the community. What is done about people who sell alcohol to underage children? Is there a law that controls selling alcohol to people under 18?
 - (Sejoe) As Ms Modiakgotla has mentioned, INSPIRE goes together with enforcement and the implementation of the law. The issue is, for everything that we feel works against us, is there a law that controls it? If it is there, then where is the problem? If the law exists that children should not be sold alcohol, then why is it happening, who needs to enforce it, and who needs to ensure that people enforce the law? Let it be an assignment for us to get to know our laws and see if any issue that works against us is covered by law, then we can know what to do about it.

COMMUNITY MAPPING, MS NTHOMPE, NORTH WEST DISTRICT COUNCIL

In her presentation, Ms Nthompe defined community mapping as a process of data collection in order to create a map of community **assets** and **resources** within a defined area, saying it involved getting to know your community, understanding what was available, and how it could be used.

She explained that as communities experienced different challenges and had different advantages, it was important for community members to know where to go and what to use in any situation that came about. As the children had been presenting about different issues that they experienced in their areas, community mapping would assist them to find ways to address such issues.

Ms Nthompe said assets were resources that had the potential to enrich and improve the quality of life within a community, and they were categorized into individual, organizations and institutional assets. Mapping them would help them identify their use, and it was important to know who or what they were benefitting, and how. She explained each of the categories, giving examples, and said it would benefit them as district committees to sit down together with support from other child care committees and do the mapping exercise together. She said as they continue to identify issues of children in their committees, they should come up with projects to address the issues, and identify any of these assets to approach or use in their projects to be able to meet their mandate.

She assigned the children to go back to their districts and identify their community assets, plot them, and go to them and make them aware of the issues that the Committee wanted to address, the importance of their involvement, and let them know that they wanted to engage them. The Committee should then come up with a plan and show them where they fit in.

She went on to talk about asset valuing, saying each asset had to be valued, and gave an example of valuing the library as an asset. She said the Committee needed to look at how the library could be used as an asset? Does it have internet, computers, are there enough books for children? Then the Committee had to decide how they would facilitate for more book supplies, access to internet in the library.

She urged them to not only look at the positive assets, also the negative ones, mentioning particular areas in the community, like bars, that children went to hang out at, and the members needed to decide what they were going to do about such areas for the protection of children. Who does it benefit and who does it exclude? She gave them a template to work with: Name of Organization/what it does /who it benefits/what can be done about it. She told them to go and use their map to draw their action plans. She also reminded them that Ms Mahama had said that they could actually go and attend the Full Council and speak for children about issues that they came across, and said this is how they could influence planning and quality decisions. They could use the opportunity to tell the Council what children needed that was not available or was not in good condition.

In closing, she said community mapping could empower the Forum to be a powerful advocate for children. She urged them to utilize all local service providers, like Councilors, Parliamentarians, Chiefs, and all local facilities; not forgetting the people that they were representing - the children. She

suggested they get a group of children in their area and move around with them, getting their views on what could be improved. She advised them to draw a map physically or digitally in order to use it when they approached people for engagement. The important thing was to know their community and to have a plan in place.

CHILDREN'S FORUM LOGO DESIGN

On the second and third day of the event, the children were given an opportunity to show their creativity and design a logo for the Children's Consultative Forum Botswana. Those that showed interest in participating were given guidelines for creating the design, art materials to select from for their art, and after submitting their designs, the appointed Judges for the activity announced the result on the third day. Judges Mr. Elijah Molatole and Mr. Prince Moyo, from the Museum in Maun, undertook the process, guiding and directing the children from the start.

Mr. Elijah Molatole announced the result of the judging. He explained that they considered the following criteria for selection of the best logo:

- The simplicity of the logo
- Creativity: how the artist assessed information and the materials used to create the logo
- Logo had to be recognizable at first sight
- Adherence to the Children's Forum mandate: clearly show what CCF is
- Target Audience
- Artistic balance
- Colors used
- What the symbols used represent

Three finalists were chosen out of all the artists who participated, and they were Joyce Makaikai of Ghanzi (1), Annalisa Cruickshank of Selebi-Phikwe (2) and Opang Reakae of South East (3). Outgoing Chairperson of Ghanzi, Joyce Makaikai, was therefore the winner as her design was selected as the best logo design, leaving behind a legacy. Each position was given a monetary award.

SESSION ONE- DAY FOUR

The last session of the Forum was chaired by the South East Chairperson Opang Reakae alongside Ms Catherine Sediadie of Kgalagadi.

DISTRICT PLANS

Ms Sejoe of Marang Child Care Network Trust called on the children to prepare their district plans which they were going to use to address issues at their districts. She said they already knew what the issues were, so they had to sit down as teams and decide what they were going to do about them. First they had to know what they wanted to achieve, how they were going to achieve it, and what activities they were going to use to achieve their goals.

The districts were given time to draw their plans and then come upfront to present them. The plans had to be written down and submitted to the facilitators so that they could be reviewed and assessed for implementation. The District Plan presentation were the last activity of the Forum.

FORUM 2019 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Forum made the following recommendations:

1. There should be an evaluation of the 2019 Forum after the event.
2. The Department of Social Protection needs to familiarize itself with all District Plans, support their implementation and review them periodically.
3. The Forum should meet at least half yearly to ensure that implementation is done and the children get support from the people that they are assigned to. The children made it clear that meeting after every 12 months was not working out for them.
4. The Department of Social Protection should invest more into the Forum to avoid issues of lack of resources that hinder its progress. The Social Workers assigned to facilitate District Forums also required support from the Department to enable them to allocate time for the Forum activities. The Department, therefore needed to take deliberate actions to enable effective implementation at district level.
5. More effort should be made to educate the nation at large about the Forum. To this end, the Forum should have its own social media accounts through which to promote itself and to communicate its activities.
6. Institutions like the National Children's Council that are created for the benefit of children should at least have one child representative, at the very least the National Chairperson of the Children's Forum. #ForUsWithoutUsIsAgainstUs
7. There should be clear lines of communication between the Forum and its supporting structures/elements like S&CD, Secretariat, and NCC: Where, when and how.