

**Child Monitor – A Bulletin of Issues and Events on Botswana’s Children**

- His Excellency, the Acting President, Lt. Gen. Seretse Khama Ian Khama, launched the **2005 State of the World’s Children’s Report**, at the United Nations Place in Gaborone. In his keynote address, the Acting President called upon all Batswana to double their efforts to fight the twin evils of HIV/AIDS and poverty. The Report is reviewed in detail on page 10 of this bulletin.
- The Ministry of Local Government, with the support of UNICEF, Childline Botswana and the Embassy of the United States, organised a National Consultative Conference on Child Protection around the theme **Fighting Child Abuse and Violence against Children in Botswana: Towards a Safe and Secure Nation**. The three-day workshop, attended by about 200 participants from around the country, recommended the establishment of a child protection protocol, directory of child protection services, child abuse data management systems, a children’s court as well as capacity building for key service providers in child protection and management of abuse cases.
- The Day of the African Child was commemorated on 16 June in Francistown under the theme **Africa’s orphans: Our collective responsibility**. Activities included a children’s debate on orphan issues, as well as the main event which included a march, speeches and drama. The Minister of Local Government, the Honourable Dr Margaret Nasha, delivered the keynote address to hundreds of youths, parents and government officials from Francistown and surrounding areas, emphasising the need for collective action in providing care and support to orphans and vulnerable children as well as the need for children to exercise responsibility while enjoying their rights.
- The final report of the 2004 **National Consultative Meeting on Access to Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for Children Living with AIDS in Botswana** has been finalised by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF, and is currently being circulated to all relevant stakeholders.
- The Ministry of Health issued the **Regulations on the Marketing of Foods for Infants and Young Children** (Government Gazette, vol. XLIII, no. 40). These regulations outline important requirements related to the marketing and practices related to foods and other designated products for infants and young children, in order to comply with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. The Regulations promote and support the relevance, benefits and superiority of breast-feeding during the first two years of a child’s life, as well as the value of exclusive breast-feeding during the first six months.
- Speaking at the official launch of the evaluation of the **Ringing the Bell Project**, a tripartite initiative between the Ministry of Education/BONEPWA/UNICEF, the Ministry’s Permanent Secretary urged all the key players to ensure that the project takes into cognizance some gender dynamics as well as the relevant lifeskills education as they carry the project to the community.
- The Ministry of Health celebrated World Health Day on 7 April, the theme of which was **Making Sure that Every Mother and Child Counts**. The Day provided an opportunity to review major achievements in the areas of child survival and maternal health, but also noted the efforts required to meet relevant Millennium Development Goals.
- In his 2005 Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, the Honourable Baledzi Gaolathe lamented the rise in child mortality rates caused by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and noted the need for accelerated interventions in order for Botswana to reach the Millennium Development Goals.
- The Ministry of Local Government, with support from UNICEF, completed the **Customary Law Review**. Part of a global project, the initiative reviewed the customary law system in Botswana, its

relationship to codified law, and its possible convergence with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- The ***BOTUSA Project*** celebrated its tenth anniversary through a review of many of the national initiatives that it has supported and that have had a major contribution on child survival.
- The Member of Parliament for Mahalapye West, Lt-General Mompoti Merafhe, noted at the launch of the ***Diphilana Project Evaluation***, that school interventions should focus on protecting children from all forms of abuse and discrimination. The project was started in 1996 with the objective of reducing pregnancy among teenage girls and increase their access basic education.
- The ***National HIV/AIDS Partnership Forum*** held its first quarterly meeting of the year in May. Chaired by NACA, the Forum is an opportunity for all partners to share information and progress on activities that support the achievement of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework. Many of these activities have a direct impact on improving the situation of children orphaned by and living with HIV/AIDS.
- The Youth Health Organisation and Ghetto Artists Production launched the Pledging Event to support their annual ***Dzalobana Bosele Arts Festival***, an alcohol free event that aims, through their *edutainment* strategy to empower young people with the life skills for holistic development.
- The Chair of the Parliamentary Commission on HIV/AIDS, the Honourable Robert Molefhabangwe, represented Botswana at the ***AWEPA*** meeting in which members of the European Parliamentary Forum met with Parliamentarians from Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland in Cape Town on 26-27 May 2005. The objective of the meeting was to discuss plans to involve Parliamentarians in programmes for orphans and vulnerable children in the African countries, with support from European Parliamentarians.
- The Ministry of Education launched the ***Circles of Support*** project which, with the financial assistance of the European Union, aims to build partnerships at the school, family and community levels to support orphans and vulnerable children and, where necessary, reintegrate them into schools.
- The ***UN Special Envoy for the Humanitarian Crisis in Southern Africa***, Mr. James Morris, visited Botswana in May. The Special Envoy held consultations with government officials, SADC, the diplomatic community and the UN family and concluded that significant strides have been achieved in mitigating the impacts of HIV/AIDS on children and women. He underscored the role of the UN in strengthening institutional response capacities.
- The children of ***Dula Sentle***, a care centre for orphaned children, have released their own music CD, in which they affirm their integrity as well as their special disposition and call for attention to issues that affect them.
- The ***Girls Education Movement (GEM)*** embarked on a project called “Telling the Story”, which is geared to bring into focus issues affecting the girl child such as HIV/AIDS, poverty and gender disparities. The project, which is part of the United Nations Girls Education Initiative, will play an advocacy role in influencing policy makers to improve the status of girls in Botswana.