

**ACCESS Press Statement
Youth Day - 16 June 2004**

ACCESS is a national alliance of over 650 children's sector organizations committed to the realization of a comprehensive social security system for children in South Africa.

16 June marks the anniversary of the Soweto uprising by the impoverished and disempowered youth of South Africa who were protesting against an unjust education policy imposed on them by the apartheid government of the day.

28 Years later South Africa's impoverished youth remain shackled by an inequitable education and limited social security policy. The difference between them and their 1976 counterparts is a Government which has committed itself to remedying the situation. It has committed itself to freeing children from the shackles of poverty through education and a comprehensive social security system. ACCESS applauds this commitment as we agree that the youth of today need a bridge to support their crossing into the adult world as active and productive members of society. That bridge must, in the first instance, be a comprehensive social security system made up of a package of cash grants, services and benefits. The services and benefits must include and prioritize access to quality education (and related services such as transport, school uniforms etc), and supplementary support such as adequate nutrition, water, sanitation and health care, which is necessary to enable children to participate in the educational opportunities made available to them

When measured against Government's commitment, the current education and social security policies fail the youth of today. 14 to 18 year old children remain outside the safety net of the child support grant. At the same time, primary and secondary education is not accessible to many of these young adults. School fee subsidies and exemptions are available in theory. Financial pressure on schools translates into (unlawful) pressure on poor children and their parents to pay fees which they cannot afford. In addition, the cost of transport to school, the cost of school uniforms and extra-curricula activities act as further barriers to education. National education policy does not cater for the subsidization of these additional costs. For those children lucky enough to attend school, hunger is often a severe problem impeding performance. At least those who receive the child support grant can partially address the question of hunger through this support. Those who do not receive it are left with the untenable choice of food or school, as articulated by a child who participated in a research study into child labour commissioned by Save the Children Sweden:

I can go to school but at home people will still be hungry. I'll be hungry after school, my uniform will still be dirty because of no soap. I might end up working again, at first after school then when I need more money I might go there instead of going to school.

ACCESS calls on the Departments of Education, Social Security, Transport, Health, and Water and Sanitation to work together in partnership to develop a complimentary and comprehensive social security system that guarantees the survival and development of all children, including young adults between the ages of 14 and 18. Such a system must include the following:

A cash grant for all poor children up to the age of 18; Access to quality education for all children; Access to supplementary services necessary to attend school, including subsidized transport and school uniforms; Sufficient food; Access to basic essential services such as water and sanitation; Access to health care.

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A number of ACCESS's member organisations will be commemorating Youth Day on Wednesday 16 June 2004 at the following venues. Details of any of these events may be obtained from Bukelwa Voko-Nobatana at ACCESS on 082 7454236 or from the relevant organization at the numbers provided:

- **Quaker Peace Centre** – will be hosting a soccer tournament for youth behind bars at the Pollsmoor Correctional Facility, Tokai, Western Cape, at 10.00am. They will be supported by a guest actor from Soul Buddyz who will speak about Sport as a Rehabilitation Tool. Contact Antonio or NokuThula at (021) 685 7800.
- **The New Women's Movement** – Young Women's Chapter is hosting a Young Women's Information Day. Speakers will include a representative from COSATU who will talk about the significance of Youth Day. The venue is Community House, Salt River, Western Cape and the programme will run from 10.00am till 2pm. Contact Kholiwe (021) 448 2364
- **PPASA** will be launching their Child Headed Household Project at the Youth Centre in Macassar, Khayelitsha from 12 till 14pm. Julia Aalbers from PPASA's National Office will be the guest speaker, and Albert Dlwengu, a project coordinator with ACCESS will be speak on ACCESS's position on child headed households.
Contact: Vivienne on (021) 448 7312
- **Molo Songololo** - Will be continuing with their roadshow which started on the day of the launch of the Child Protection Week. It has been touring the Swartland area and will be at the Saxon Sea Civic Centre in Atlantis at 11.00am on the 16 June. They will be supported by a guest actor from Soul Buddyz who will speak on child abuse. The provincial police commissioner is expected to speak as well as other local leaders from religious groups who will join together in a prayer for peace. Contact Vanessa on (021) 572 6075
- **Women on Farms Project** – will be hosting a youth day programme in Grabouw, Molteno Farm, Western Cape from 9.00am. Contact Denise on (021) 887 2960/1