

**Carol Bower, short-listed for the position of Children's Commissioner:
short biography and overview of relevant information**

I came to work in children's rights via a long-term commitment to preventing violence against women, and dealing with its aftermath. I became a member of Rape Crisis Cape Town (RCCT) upon its inception in 1976, and I worked in it for the next 10 years as a volunteer. Another 10 years later, I became the first-ever Director at RCCT.

I began to realise, increasingly, the strong linkages between violence experienced in childhood and violence perpetrated in adulthood. I realised that the problem of gender-based violence will not be addressed until violence against children is addressed; and that the way we raise children will have to change before we will see a reduction in our unacceptably high levels of violence of all forms in all settings. In short, I learned that, if we want to change the world, we must change childhood.

So, I resigned from RCCT and, in 2000, became the director of a child right's organisation. My time at RAPCAN¹ fundamentally confirmed the importance of protecting and nurturing children's rights in trying to move society forward to be kinder, more empathetic and compassionate, and human-rights-focussed.

RAPCAN had long advocated against corporal punishment in all settings, and that focus was strengthened and deepened during my tenure as director. During that time, RAPCAN developed and implemented a very successful *Positive Discipline in the Classroom* training programme and opened the first *Child Witness* programme in Cape Town to support child witnesses and prepare them for giving evidence in court (most frequently, in cases of sexual abuse). As the director, I was also very involved in working on the *Draft Children's Act* (38 of 2005) from 2002-2006 and the *First Amendment to the Act*, passed in 2007.

After attending the delayed *UN General Assembly Special Session on Children* in New York in 2002, I was asked to serve on the NGO Advisory Panel that was subsequently set up to guide and work with Prof. Paulo Pinhero on *the Global Study on Violence Against Children*, from 2002-2006. I was also, until 2006, a member of the Geneva-based *NGO Group on the Rights of the Child*.

These activities gave me invaluable exposure to the international child rights framework to which South Africa is a signatory, and equipped me to play a lead role in preparing text for, and coordinating and editing the Combined 2nd, 3rd and 4th Alternate Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) in 2014, and the first and second Complimentary Reports to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) in 2014 and 2016.

After the Draft Children's Bill was released in 2002, RAPCAN under my direction, was a founder-member of the Children's Bill Working Group (CBWG) and the lead organisation in the Working Group on Positive Discipline sub-group.

During 2000-2006, as the director of RAPCAN, I travelled extensively, locally, regionally and internationally to attend and present at Conferences, to make

¹ Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, no longer in existence.

strategic connections with others in the field and to deepen RAPCAN's commitment to and involvement in protecting children's rights.

As an Independent Child Rights Consultant since August 2006, I have been involved in a range of projects in relation to children's rights in South Africa (in addition to my involvement in developing law and the writing of Alternate and Complementary Reports), including among others:

- Best practice in dealing with teacher/student sexual abuse for Lusweti (the contracting organisation), based in Swaziland.
- Evaluation of good practice in addressing child labour for the TECL Project of the ILO office in Pretoria.
- Review of policy and law and its effectiveness to protect children from sexual violence and HIV for CADRE (contracting organisation).
- Review of the Children's Act (No 38 of 2005 as Amended) and policy within the child protection framework in terms of whether these are actually protective of children.
- Child sexual abuse in sub-Saharan Africa (prevalence, causes, consequences, prevention and protection) for the East, Central and Southern African Health Community (ECSA-HC) Tanzania.
- Evaluation of the work London-based Global Fund to End Corporal Punishment against Children
- Investigation of the barriers to the development of a surveillance system on VAW and VAC in South Africa for UNICEF and MRC.
- Mapping of Save the Children's global work on prohibiting physical and humiliating punishment for Save the Children Sweden.
- A complaint lodged with the South African Human Rights Commission against the Joshua Generation Church, for the 'instruction' in their parenting manual on the length and thickness of the rod to use on children from age 12 months.
- One of three amici in a submission to the South Gauteng High Court on the constitutionality of the defence of reasonable chastisement.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Bower'.

Carol Bower