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PLAY AFRICA LAUNCHES NEW CHILDREN'S VOICES PROGRAMME AT CONSTITUTION HILL WITH SUPPORT FROM CANADA FUND FOR LOCAL INITIATIVES

Strengthens children's rights, girls' rights and democracy

*Introduces young children to the Constitution, the rule of law,
and how to participate in a democratic society*

JOHANNESBURG (8 August 2018) – Play Africa, a children's museum based at Constitution Hill, today launched its new Children's Voices programme, which will run through February 2019 with support from the Government of Canada's Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).

Play Africa's Children's Voices programme nurtures children's own concept of themselves and their rights as secured in South Africa's Constitution. Through play and dialogue, the programme strengthens children's rights and girls' rights by introducing all children to the core values of the Constitution, the rule of law, and different ways they can make their voices heard in a democratic society. It also introduces children to key concepts enshrined in the Constitution, including human dignity, freedom and equality.

Because of the programme's special focus on the rights of girls, as well as all children, the programme was launched to coincide with Women's Day 2018. This national public holiday commemorates the Women's March of 1956 and is often used to highlight the many ongoing struggles women and girls still face in South Africa.

"Despite South Africa's many strides towards a more democratic, rights-based society, children's rights are routinely violated, and children, and particularly girls and gender-nonconforming children, remain the most vulnerable members of our society," said Play Africa CEO Gretchen Wilson-Prangley. "With generous support from the Government of Canada, Play Africa is helping children learn about the Constitution, their human rights, and how democratically to participate in decisions that affect their lives, so South Africa's democracy can thrive in future generations."

Play Africa's original programme helps build children's awareness of their rights as enshrined the Constitution, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Play Africa's Children's Voices programme will consist of 42 facilitator-led workshops that introduce the Constitution, the concept of the rule of law and the South African justice system. Children are then invited to "register" to vote, and use Play Africa's voting booths, election boxes and results tables to participate in mock-elections about matters that affect their lives – from silly to serious. They then

count the votes and record their results before discussing the benefits and challenges of a democratic process.

The programme will also include the creation of a visually-dynamic, interactive and multi-media exhibit on children's rights, including the rights of girls and women in South Africa, aimed to build awareness and inspire action to advance the rights of girls and women in our society.

Play Africa is based at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, a former prison complex that is now seat of South Africa's Constitutional Court. Play Africa is based inside the Old Fort section of the precinct, just 20 metres from the former prison cell where Nelson Mandela was once incarcerated. The location is particularly significant this year as 2018 marks the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela. This anniversary provides a unique opportunity for to reflect on his life and times and to promote his legacy through collaborations with local partners that promote democracy and human rights.

The Children's Voices programme builds on a successfully one-month pilot programme in March of this year, which was funded by the Canadian High Commission in South Africa. The pilot programme was rolled-out with 371 children at Constitution Hill and at five low-resourced schools in the inner city of Johannesburg (including one school for children with disabilities).

The proudly South African children's museum programme is inspired by global examples that teach children about their rights. Research shows that children's participation in democratic life enables children to express how they feel and what they think, to learn from one another, and to speak out if their rights are being violated.

"As we discovered in our pilot programme, empowering children with awareness of their rights is particularly important for girls and gender-nonconforming children, who are often among the most vulnerable and excluded from participating fully in public life," Wilson-Prangley said.

The programme, formally called "Children's Voices: Strengthening Children Rights, Girls' Rights and Democracy in South Africa Through Empowering Dialogue and Play at Constitution Hill," is made possible with funding from the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), which supports small-scale but high-impact projects in developing countries that align with key priority areas of the Government of Canada's international assistance. South Africa's democratic Constitution was inspired in part by the Constitution of Canada, and developed with support from Canadian advisory teams.

Members of the public who would like their children or their children's school to participate in the programme are welcome to register by emailing info@playafrica.org.za or calling 011 381 3121 during Play Africa's open hours.

Play Africa is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays. Admission is free, though donations are welcome and encouraged.

About Play Africa

A groundbreaking, community-connected children's museum based at Constitution Hill, Play Africa is a shared public space that champions children's rights, inspires children and strengthens family relationships by offering unique three-dimensional learning experiences. Based at the iconic Constitution Hill, Play Africa transforms and re-casts the former prison into a joyful hub of play, learning and discovery. Through unique exhibits and programmes with a focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths, Play Africa ignites curiosity and a love of learning in young people, building the next generation of South African inventors, problem-solvers and innovators. Play Africa Group is a registered South African non-profit company (#2014/101533/08), and a registered public benefit organisation (#930048005) with Section 18A tax-exempt status in South Africa. Play Africa is made possible through grants from FirstRand Foundation, and the RMB's Creative Arts Programme, along with dozens of other partners. For more information, visit playafrica.org.za.

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