CHILDREN'S VOICES

STRENGTHENING CHILDREN RIGHTS, GIRLS' RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA THROUGH EMPOWERING DIALOGUE AND PLAY



ABOUT CHILDREN'S VOICES

Children's Voices is an original Play Africa programme made possible by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. It helps create a new generation of informed, engaged South African citizens who feel empowered to make a positive difference in the world around them, and who are aware of their rights and responsibilities as enshrined in the Constitution.

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.

GOALS FOR CHILDREN

Children's Voices is a special one-year programme, designed and implemented by Play Africa in collaboration with the education team at Constitution Hill, in this programme, children will:



LEARN ABOUT THE CONSTITUTION AND RIGHTS

- Through dialogue and playful activities, children are introduced to key concepts of South Africa's democratic Constitution, children's rights, and the rule of law
- Children develop a greater awareness of their rights
- Children are empowered with a vocabulary to engage in dialogue about abstract concepts of human rights, children's rights, girls' rights, democracy and rule of law

LEARN HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING

- Children explore the Constitution and notion of the rule of law in a mock-courtroom environment, understanding the court as an important and meaningful institution to protect children's rights and human rights in any democracy
- Children are introduced to the concept of democratic decision making through an election, and are given first-hand experience in "registering" to vote, voting at a child-size booth, casting a ballot in a ballot box, and awaiting the results



BUILD AWARENESS AND INSPIRE ACTION TO ADVANCE THE RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

- Increase the visibility of the importance of children's rights and girls' rights at Constitution Hill through a custom-built, interactive children's rights exhibit
- Foster dialogue among children and adults about girls' rights

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WHY DEMOCRACY?

For South Africa's democracy to thrive in future generations, children learn must about the Constitution, their human rights, and how democratically to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Research shows that children's participation enables children to "express how they feel and what they think; to learn from peers; and to speak out in public about important matters," and to "claim their socio-economic rights and to alert people to rights violations." While both boys and girls in South Africa suffer from poor awareness of their rights, and from limited education on how to participate in democratic public life and to share their views on pertinent issues, girls, by virtue of the limited economic and social power, face additional barriers.

A SPECIAL CHANCE FOR GIRLS' VOICES TO BE HEARD

Many girls and women in South Africa do not get special opportunities to openly engage in dialogue with their peers and teachers about the unique challenges they face. Based on our pilot, we heard from girls that they are often discouraged to speak out in class or at home. As a result, civic education initiatives, such as our programme, must be even more responsive to meeting the special needs of girls, women and gender-nonconforming people if we are to help consolidate recent gains in the electoral administration. This, along with our experiences in the pilot, is why we decided to feature the rights of girls and women as a central dialogue theme in this one-year project.

"Participating in Play Africa's Children's Voices programme gave me a chance to learn that it's important to vote because your vote is your voice. I will vote one day."

-- Laeylah, 9

PLAY AFRICA

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