

- \* all children have the right to be protected from neglect and abandonment;
- \* all children have the right to be protected from township and political violence and to have community centres where they can go for help and safety from violence;
- \* all children have the right to be educated about child abuse and the right to form youth groups to protect them from abuse;
- \* all persons have the duty to report violence against, abuse of and neglect of any child to the appropriate authorities;
- \* children should not be used as shields or tools by perpetrators of violence;
- \* children have the right to say no to violence;
- \* the media has the duty to prevent the exploitation of children who are victims of violence and should be prohibited from the promotion of violence;
- \* all children have the right to be protected from violence by the police and in prisons;
- \* children should not be obligated or forced to follow adults in their political involvements;
- \* all children have the right to be free from torture and detention;
- \* all children have the right to protection from drug and alcohol abuse by their parents, families and others;
- \* children have the right to a special children's court and medical facilities to protect them from violence;
- \* special groups and organisations should be formed within the communities to protect and counsel victims of violence;
- \* no child should be held in prison or police cells at any time;

**Article****6****Family Life**

- \* all children have the right to a safe, secure and nurturing family;
- \* all children have the right to love and affection from their parents and family;
- \* all children have the right to clothing, housing and a healthy diet;
- \* all children have the right to clean water, sanitation and a clean living environment;
- \* all children have the right to be protected from domestic violence;
- \* all children who do not have a family should be provided with a safe and secure place to live and with clothing and nutritious food;
- \* special protections should be given to children who are orphaned or abandoned, and every effort should be made to place them within a safe and secure family;

**Article****7****Health and Welfare**

- \* all children have the right to adequate health care and medical attention both before and after birth;
- \* all children have the right to be protected from harmful substances such as cigarettes, drugs and alcohol and to be educated about the effects on their health and environment;
- \* all children have the right to free and comprehensive health services, especially in schools;
- \* all children have the right to demand health and medical care without the permission of their parent or guardian;
- \* all children have the right to be protected and educated about AIDS;
- \* disabled children have the right to special health care and protections;

## Article

## 8

**Education**

- \* all children have the right to free and equal, non-racial, non-sexist and compulsory education within one department;
- \* all children have a right to education which is in the interest of the child;

- \* all teachers should be qualified and should treat children with patience respect and dignity;
- \* parents have the duty to become involved in their children's education and development and to participate in their children's education at school and at home;
- \* all children have the right to play and to free and adequate sports and recreational facilities;
- \* all children have the right to participate in the evaluation and upgrading of curriculum which respects all traditions, cultures and values;
- \* all children have the right to education on issues such as sexuality, AIDS, human rights, history of South Africa and family life;
- \* all children have the right to adequate educational facilities and transportation to such facilities should be provided to children in difficult and violent situations;

## Article

## 9

**Child Labour**

- \* all children have the right to be protected from child labour and any other economic exploitation;
- \* all children, especially in rural areas, should be protected from hard labour including farm, domestic or manual labour;

- \* all children have the right to be protected from prostitution and sexual exploitation;
- \* there should be a minimum age of employment and no child should be forced to leave school prior to the completion of matric for the purposes of employment;
- \* there should be regulations and restrictions on the hours and types of work and penalties for those who violate these regulations;
- \* all children have the right to be protected from child slavery and from the inheritance of labour from their parent or family;

## Article

## 10

**Homeless Children**

- \* no child should be forced to live on the streets;
- \* homeless children have the right to protection from harassment and abuse from police, security guards and all other persons;
- \* homeless children have the right to a decent place to live, clothing and a healthy diet;

- \* street children have the right to special attention in education and health care;
- \* communities and families have a duty to protect their children from becoming homeless and abandoned;
- \* all persons should be made aware of the plight of homeless children and should participate in programmes which act to eradicate this problem;
- \* the government has a duty and responsibility for homeless children.

# Hunger and Death

## Time To Act

### *Operation Hunger*

Earlier this year, we tried to underline the gravity of the life threatening situation in many parts of our country. The latest statistics indicate that the situation is even worse than anticipated. Hunger is the norm and child deaths are dramatically on the increase. In a report of the Co-ordinating Committee for Drought Relief, it is estimated that 17 million South Africans are living in a situation of extreme poverty. Twelve million of these are unable to acquire sufficient food to maintain themselves at an adequate nutrition level. Some 4 million are, we estimate, in a critical, and potentially life threatening situation.

We in South Africa can no longer use our favourite fob-off "but look at the rest of Africa". World Bank figures show that 53% of our children are physically stunted, the victims of chronic protein energy malnutrition. The all Africa average is 39%. South Africa has a worse child death and malnutrition track record than Botswana and Mauritius, countries which are far less wealthy than ours.

South African child death statistics are more than double that of the average for countries across the world with similar income levels. In this country, 73 out of every 1000 children die before reaching the age of five. The world average for countries of comparable wealth is 35.

### **Economic Decline, the Drought and Violence**

True, this represents a drop from the 91 deaths per 1000 live births in 1982, but it must be remembered that, by 1987, the 1982 figure had been halved. The last three years have shown a sharp increase. The continuing decline in the country's economy has affected all parts of the country. Unemployment has reached higher levels than ever before, and rural families dependent on migrant bread-winners have been particularly hard hit.

In addition, the drought has critically affected many people's ability to feed themselves. The lack of water has resulted in repeated crop failure, with a consequent increase in the number of mouths to feed. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the drought simply exacerbated an already dangerous situation. The reality is that the vast majority of South Africa's rural population

are not in a position to sustain themselves off the land. The recent rains have not led to much of an improvement.

On top of all this, the levels of violence in many areas have contributed to escalating conditions of malnutrition and starvation. Over and above the physical destruction of homes, crops and facilities, the violence also drives people away from their traditional areas into regions where they are unable to support themselves.

The greatest hardship is still suffered by the rural population, but the problem of squatters in the urban areas is also a matter for serious concern. There is, for example, an influx of approximately 10 000 people from the Transkei and Ciskei to Cape Town every month. Squatting in this country has traditionally been identified with the migration of destitute black people to the towns. A rapidly evolving variation of this theme is the appearance of white squatters. These people are equally as desperate and provide their own set of unique social problems.



**Clinical signs of malnutrition, Transkei, circa 1988. Photo: Medico**