

## Southern Street Children Network

The situation in the South for a long time involved 6 long-term hardened street children and about 20 day strollers migrating to the Muizenberg/Kalk Bay from the Capricorn/Vrygrond areas. The well-touristed shopping and restaurant destination offered 'rich pickings' for the 'sunshine kids' (as they came to be known) singing their familiar tune. Disconnected efforts to help these children yielded no results for a long time.

In the last two years, the WCSCF has supported a strong partnership between Roleplayers in the Southern region, specifically involving the Kalk Bay SRA, the Muizenberg Improvement District, Muizenberg SAPS and the Metro South Department of Social Development. We would like to show special gratitude to Marion and her Improvement Districts who have really gone all out in their commitment to assisting children on the street, and their families, as well as talking on the improvement of the whole 'system' operating in the area. They have done this by putting vital funding and resources into staff, office space and time commitment - and this is yielding results!! Joint operations involving these organisations started out as 'learning curves', but through time, commitment and much effort, resulted in collaborative procedures which are starting to assist street-affected children and their families. Through these actions, systematic blockages were identified, gaps in the system that the children squeeze through could be filled, ... each Roleplayer playing (their specific role learning as they go), supporting the actions of the others, communicating well, drawing in new sectors and Roleplayers as necessary, all to make

interventions more and more effective. Special mention must be made of the commitment and collaboration of Imelda Aprils and her growing team of Metro South Social Workers, who have patiently put up with the bulldog tenacity of 'the street children sector' and who have, with growing expertise, come on board in a strong and dedicated way. Thank you! We know it is not easy! And we are excited by current plans to place designated teams right into the communities. Yes!!

Through the amazing steadfastness of so many people, organisations and sectors (not all mentioned here), the Southern region is starting to see children getting help, mothers becoming empowered and strengthened and systems start to find some effective traction in the lives of vulnerable people.

The WCSCF holds this up as a 'best practice' networking model which we hope to replicate in regions all over the Western Cape, partnering with similar committed, compassionate, professional people!

*"The greatest success for the South this year has to be the monthly meetings that are held with DSD and the southern improvement districts. These meetings aim to strengthen relationships and build capacity in the South. A need to empower and inform organisations of the legal framework and the practical challenges when working with street children is being highlighted."*

**Marion Thomas (Social Development Practitioner for KBSJSRA & MID)**