

Working towards quality services for children on the move in South Africa

Technical brief TWO

Principle-led and gender-responsive services



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Technical Briefs in the *Working towards quality services for children on the move in South Africa* series:

Technical Brief ONE: Integrating child protection services

Technical Brief TWO: Principle-led and gender-responsive services

Technical Brief THREE: A transformative child-centred practice

Technical Brief FOUR: Addressing structural barriers



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EU Global Promotion of Best Practices for Children in Migration – a project, implemented by UNHCR and UNICEF and the South African Department of Social Development and co-funded by the European Union, UNHCR and UNICEF.

The Best Practices for Children in Migration Project was a 30-month project (October 2020 – July 2023). The overall objective of the project was to contribute to the effective protection of children on the move and the realisation of their rights through child protection systems that provide quality integrated services, alternative care and mental health and psychosocial support all with a gender sensitive lens. The project sought to document and share lessons learnt and best practices towards the use of alternative care options to replace immigration detention.

The project was implemented across four countries in two regions: El Salvador and Mexico in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region (LACR); and South Africa and Zambia in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR). The programme's final beneficiaries are children on the move, including migrant, internally displaced, returnee, asylum seeking, and refugee children as well as children who move voluntarily or involuntarily, within or between countries, with or without their parents or other primary caregivers.

Three of the four outcomes identified in the project framework for the South African component of the Best Practice Project are listed below:

- Child protection systems include gender responsive, high quality, and integrated services in reception centres and other care and attention facilities.
- Child protection systems have integrated, gender responsive psychosocial services and prevention mechanisms addressing gender-based violence and other structural problems.
- Child protection systems provide alternative care options, with emphasis on community and family-based alternatives.

The fourth outcome was to document and share lessons learnt and best practices related to processes, approaches, and methodologies adopted through the project experience in South Africa.

This is the second technical brief in a series of four that document what the implementing NGO partners have learned about how to deliver quality integrated services for children on the move.

This set of technical briefs focuses on the South African project which was implemented in partnership with the South Africa Department of Social Development, UNHCR and its implementing partners: The Scalabrini Centre (Western Cape); Refugee Social Services (KwaZulu Natal); The Centre for Child Law (University of Pretoria); Future Families (Limpopo); The South African Human Rights Commission (national), Action for Conflict Transformation (Gauteng); Childline (national), and The Consortium of Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (national).

Children on the move

The umbrella term 'Children on the move' refers to children who migrate within their countries or across borders. Children move for a variety of reasons: to seek protection, to pursue a better life, or to reunite with family. Some children migrate with their families while others move alone because of conflict, natural disaster or other deprivations. Children on the move can include refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced children, trafficked and smuggled children, and children who are documented or undocumented (1).

Acronyms

ACRWC African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACT Action for Conflict Transformation
CYCC Child and Youth Care Centres
DBE Department of Education
DIRCO Department of International Development
DOCJ Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
DOE Department of Education
DOH Department of Health
DOHA Department of Home Affairs
DOJ Department of Justice
DSD Department of Social Development
ESAR Eastern and Southern Africa Region
EU European Union
GBV Gender-based violence
LACR Latin America and the Caribbean Region
MHPSS Mental health and psychosocial support
NGO Non-governmental organisation
SAHRC The South African Human Rights Commission
SAPS South African Police Service
SOP Standard Operating Procedure
UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

Background

Across Southern Africa, children move within and over borders, to earn money, to escape conflict, to support their families at home, to escape domestic violence, to escape oppression or persecution, for education, for adventure, or due to changes in families such as the death of a caregiver (2,3). Some children on the move in the region travel with family members or informal caregivers, but many travel alone, either having chosen to move in search of work and education or having been separated from families on their journeys. All children on the move in Southern Africa are protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) which make it the responsibility of individual countries to protect children wherever they are regardless of the origin of those children (4,5). The ACRWC states that 'the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration in actions concerning the child' and protects the right to education, the right to health, the right to a name, and the right to a nationality and to be registered at birth (4).

In South Africa there are an estimated 642,000 migrant and refugee children making it the country with the largest population of children on the move on the continent (6)¹. South Africa's progressive legislative framework provides for the right to self-settlement of migrants (rather than being placed in camps), access to basic healthcare, and to education (7). The care and protection of unaccompanied and separated migrant children is determined by the courts and children are often placed in child and youth care centres (CYCC)², or in community-based foster care (8).

However, the laws and policies designed to address key welfare and protection challenges for children on the move lack robust implementation. This means that many children, particularly those who are separated or unaccompanied, face barriers to accessing asylum, documentation, healthcare, education, and other basic services and rights. Additionally, the lack of social protection means that many families and children on the move live in deep poverty in unsuitable housing without the ability to access education or enter the formal economy because of a lack of documentation. These precarious living conditions coupled with high levels of xenophobia from some local residents creates ongoing stress which, in addition to past traumatic experiences, affects caregivers' and children's psychosocial wellbeing (9).

South Africa has adopted the UN and UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees (2018) and the Global Compact on Migration (2018) both of which ensure a human rights and child-centred approach to child protection across borders and within the country (10,11). Additionally, UNICEF's key frameworks on children on the move, including the Global Framework on Children on the Move, the Six-Point Agenda for Programmatic Action, and Children Uprooted – What Local Governments Can Do (1,12), contribute to the approach used in South Africa. However, an increasingly restrictive migration governance framework, inconsistencies between policy and practice, and increasing anti-foreigner sentiments pose challenges for those working with children on the move (13,14). That said, there have also been many positive steps, primarily driven by a collaborative approach by state and non-state actors, to safeguard and protect children on the move. The Best Practice Project has worked with some of these actors to extend the reach and increase the effectiveness of this work. This series of technical briefs highlights some of that work.



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- 1 Accurate statistics on children on the move in the region are difficult to access as children and youth often choose to remain 'invisible' for their own protection. Additionally country census processes do not all make provision for migrancy. Therefore, the number of migrant children is likely much higher.
- 2 Amendment of Section 45 of the South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 provides for the placement of children in alternative care. A child and youth care centre is a facility that provides residential care. The Act outlines the norms and standards for the CYCCs.

Methodology for documenting the Best Practice Project

A qualitative, emergent research approach was used to document the Best Practice Project. Implementing partners of the project participated in semi-structured interviews and a reflective workshop to share the work they had done (15). The reflective workshop included 'mapping' the context in which each partner worked including the policy frameworks within which they work, the activities they undertook, the underlying principles they applied, and the impacts they observed. The workshop provided an opportunity to create the story of their project using visual tools that explained the ways they worked and case studies of individual children. This approach allows authentic data to emerge and makes the resulting technical briefs co-created products (16).

The discussions from the workshop were recorded, transcribed, and combined with the data from the interviews. This data was analysed using a thematic approach where emergent themes were identified in the data. These themes directly informed the focus of each of the technical briefs in this series. In each of the briefs the examples provided by the implementing partners highlight different, but closely related, human rights and child protection initiatives, including legislative and policy reform processes in South Africa.

"Sharing our work and thinking critically has shown me that in everything we do, even assisting one family, we are doing activism and working for social justice."

During the documentation workshop participants worked on a large drawing to map their work with children on the move. As we discussed these drawings in the workshop there was reflection on the principles that informed their approach. Some of these principles were articulated directly but they often emerged as participants described the activities they had implemented under the Best Practice Project. We recorded these emergent principles and reflected them back to the participants. We observed how this process clarified values and elevated the participants' own perception of their practice, giving them confidence in their approaches and processes.

While the partners employ a diverse range of approaches, they all described principle-led processes and practices, which formed a foundation for the care, protection, GBV, HIV and psychosocial support work they did. The principles they articulated included a commitment to human rights, social justice, child safeguarding, gender-responsiveness, a belief in the empowerment of communities and centring the contextual realities of children on the move before, during, and after migration. In the struggle for equality and justice for children on the move we observed that the collective care among the workshop participants made their activism work more sustainable – through the shared responsibility that they acknowledged.

Critically, participants described how a principle-led practice was important to help individuals working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) cope with being overwhelmed by their work and with the exhaustion it causes. Especially because many organisations struggle to sustain their responses given the increased number and frequency of emergencies and the increasing needs and rights violations in the contexts within which they work. During a debriefing session, one of the workshop participants described their experience of sharing stories, concerns, and achievements as "restorative, igniting a passion, showing that it takes a specific group who have worked and faced similar challenges, and know what we are up against, to understand one another and to still see a way forward". Equally, the researchers also reflected on how the focus during discussions between participants was not on 'what can't be done', but instead located the challenges within a context of 'what can be done'. What they could do was primarily led by core principles as described in the examples below.



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What do we mean by Principle-led Practice?

The Best Practice Project outcomes are built around the principles of equity, responsiveness, and centrality of community among others (1). All of the NGO partners who were part of the project in South Africa applied these principles, but some went further by rooting their work in local principles that emerged from their specific context and practice. Two of these examples are explored here.

The power of principle-led practice lies in the ways in which a set of key principles can drive a range of approaches and interventions with children on the move to be more impactful. Principle-led practice can help create interventions that address the multiple protection and support needs of children while being responsive to the instability and uncertainty that many children on the move face. This work has to be done in the context of regional and state laws, policies, and guidelines that are not always supportive or enabling. Having principles that are a foundation for their work helps partners make decisions in these complex situations. This is an example of best practice.

Principles, while not static, do provide a framework for decision-making and addressing challenges in the short, medium, and long term about what, how, and why certain approaches are used when trying to offer quality services. Working with a 'principle framework' reduces stress for service providers as decisions can be made and justified in relation to a set of core principles. This ultimately builds confidence and supports actions that are intentional and ethical.

What principles led partners' action in the Best Practice Project?

- The principle of 'honouring children's rights' particularly the right to a name and nationality, to documentation, education, health, and protection. All of these are rooted in the UNCRC (17) and are a central part of what the Best Practice Project outcomes call quality services. As described above, what emerged from the discussions in the documentation workshop is that each project partner expressed and applied the principle of honouring children's rights in a context-specific way. They embedded the principle in the values of their own organisations, expressing them in a manner congruent to their practice. Example 1 below is a good example of this.
- The principle of 'belonging'. The recognition that in order to feel safe, to feel included, and to establish an identity children need to feel they belong. This principle drives an approach in which children are listened to within their own contexts, understood based on the experiences they share, and supported to be at the centre of responses that impact them.

- Recognition that the differing **cultural and contextual knowledge** of all children on the move is an important factor to take into account in addressing their needs in practice. This aligns with UNICEF's principle of ensuring equitable services (1) that take into account the specific needs of migration status, age and gender, for example. What the examples below describe is how partners took the equity concept and applied it in the context of children in a care facility and in a community-based child protection project. In doing this they show us how we can apply what is often an abstract concept in practice.
- The principle of **community solidarity, mutuality, and ownership**. Partners designed interventions where action for the protection of children came from within the community itself and involved families and community members as collaborative allies, rather than being agency-led. The second example below embodies this principle.



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Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) is critical to the well-being of children on the move. The Scalabrini Centre describes the principle of 'belonging' as a central tenet of their MHPSS work. The Scalabrini Centre recognises that labels such as 'traumatised' and 'victimised' are limited in their ability to properly describe the experiences that children on the move may have faced. Focussing on the principle of 'belonging', however, has opened up new ways of helping children deal with traumatic experiences. A sense of belonging can facilitate relationships, social and culture connectedness, self-worth, and well-being (18). For those who have experienced loss, despair, and isolation building a sense of belonging is particularly important.

This is especially true for children on the move in South Africa, partly because of the impact that enduring poverty and living in derelict and violent neighbourhoods can have on a child's self-worth. Additionally, the very difficult process of accessing identification documents, and in being labelled 'illegal', deepens the sense of not belonging or feeling unwelcome in a society (19). It is this challenge that Scalabrini Cape Town Centre's Lawrence House staff try to address.

Lawrence House is a registered CYCC based in Woodstock, Cape Town. It is an independent children's home run by the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town. Lawrence House can accommodate up to 25 children and youth and specialises in the care and protection of unaccompanied foreign minors and refugee children. Lawrence House adopts a non-binary approach to agency which acknowledges and embraces the children and young people's vulnerabilities, while acknowledging their resiliencies, competencies, goals, and strengths (20). In addition, they also take an Afrocentric approach to the social and relational factors that underpin and shape the children and youth's decision-making processes.

Children are placed in CYCCs and other facilities for diverse reasons including: care-givers being unable to financially provide the basic needs for their children; abandonment by parents; being identified as orphans (with parents having passed away in their country of origin or subsequent to migration); parents or adult care-givers not in South Africa (the child having migrated alone or with others who are not parents or caregivers); and neglect and/or abuse in the home. Family tracing and reunification is the preferred option in law and policy for separated and unaccompanied children (8), where this is in the best interests of the child. In the cases listed above this possibility is limited and therefore other durable solutions are sought including integration into family-type set-ups and institutional placements in CYCCs, such as Lawrence House.

In pursuit of providing care that is in the best interests of children there is growing advocacy at a global level to move away from institutional care for unaccompanied children and towards alternatives such as kinship or foster care. The Better Care Network (21), for example, made up of global NGOs, including UNICEF, works to "increase, strengthen, and support family and community-based care options for children and to ensure that residential care is used in a strictly limited manner and always as a temporary placement".³ The need for a range of alternative care settings is also recognised in South African legislation. Sections 180 to 182 of the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007, provide that a child can be placed into foster care with a suitable person by a children's court order (22). A distinction is made between non-kinship foster care, kinship foster care and cluster foster care⁴ (Section 180 of the South African Children's Act 38 of 2005) (23).

Many South African NGOs who run CYCCs including the Scalabrini Centre, recognise that institutional care is not the 'best practice'. However, they also have to work with the reality that migrant children's kin often cannot be traced and that South Africa's foster care system faces multiple challenges.⁵ Therefore, residential care is sometimes the only option. This reality is also influenced by the fact that many separated and unaccompanied children and other children on the move do not have any form of documentation, including birth certificates. This not only makes them highly vulnerable to statelessness and trafficking but also to arrest, detention, and deportation once they are old enough to leave state care (6,19). Therefore, the need to ensure that children are placed in a setting where they can receive the correct social and legal support to begin the processes of accessing documentation means that residential care is sometimes a more practical option. According to the United Nations 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 2010' (25), governments must provide individualised family and community-based care to all children who have temporarily or permanently lost parental care, including children on the move. This is an advocacy area that Scalabrini and other partners in the Best Practice Project are working on to ensure that barriers such as lack of documentation and ignorance of family tracing are surfaced.

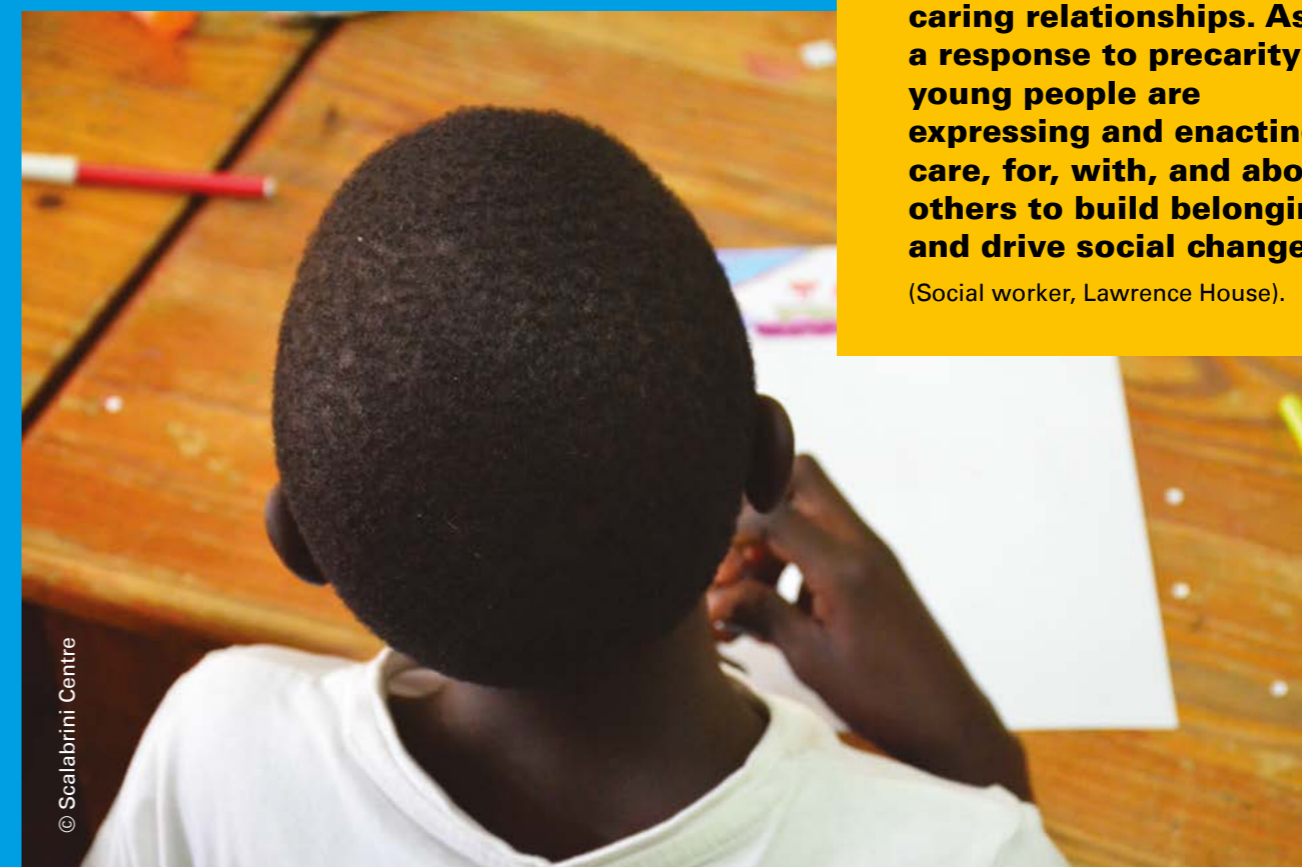
One of the principles that informs all of the Scalabrini Centre's work is 'belonging', which is closely linked to the Scalabrini Centre's idea of 'welcoming'. This is applied in the work of Lawrence House by accepting children and young people as they are, no matter the complexity of their behaviour, which is often a result of their past experiences. The process of welcoming was described by Scalabrini staff not only as a formality but as a 'methodology' that is employed to give the children a sense of belonging. Through simple practices such as a ritual to allow children to introduce themselves to the others in their chosen way and encouraging children to prepare food for each other the house works to create "caring relationships as a response to precarity ... [making sure] ... young people are expressing and enacting care, for, with, and about others to build belonging and drive social change" (Social worker, Lawrence House).

Another important aspect of working with the principle of belonging is that it ensures that children feel safe and do not feel under pressure to share information or tell their story if they do not want to. This is illustrated by a young boy who arrived at Lawrence House choosing to never tell his story. Staff only understood why when four years later he wrote his story in a book and presented it to a staff member saying "now I have told you the truth you can send me away." He was afraid that his story would not fit into the 'correct' story that would allow him to stay in the safe space the house represented for him. He was reassured that he did, in fact, belong no matter what his story was.

This shows how welcoming, as a process guided by the principle of belonging, is designed to gently shape (institutional) spaces, that may initially seem unsafe to children, into safe spaces "which allow children to thrive and grow despite the pain and difficulty." (Social worker, Lawrence House)

The house works to create caring relationships. As a response to precarity young people are expressing and enacting care, for, with, and about others to build belonging and drive social change"

(Social worker, Lawrence House).



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3 Mission Statement, Better Care Network

4 Cluster foster care is a form of care that originated in the traditional practice of providing spontaneous care for children in need of care and protection *within* the community by community members, often in a 'children's house' where they are cared for by different community members

5 The Department of Social Development has yet to complete a legislative process that would provide a comprehensive legal solution to eliminate the challenges faced by the foster care system. These challenges include a massive backlog of foster care orders and deviations and lack of funding to employ social workers (24).

Scalabrini Centre Cape Town

Documentation and belonging

Documentation is integral to the protection and safeguarding of children on the move in South Africa. The obstacles to regularising their stay in South Africa mean that many children are at a high risk of statelessness, face difficulties in accessing education and other basic rights, and may be more vulnerable to labour exploitation in the future (19). Alongside the practical need for children on the move to access this right, is the impact that a lack of documentation has on the psychological wellbeing of children on the move.

Staff at Lawrence House have recognised the centrality of documentation to children's identity and particularly how the denial of papers which could provide ties to a place, a home, a community, and country essentially tell a child "you do not belong here." Staff at the house highlight the links between the lack of documentation and challenges participating in 'normal' aspects of everyday life, particularly those that come with the transition out of Lawrence House when a child turns 18. Not having documents makes accessing tertiary education, finding work, opening a bank account, and accessing social services, health, and other support difficult – if not impossible. The future orientation of these children (a significant indicator of psychosocial wellbeing) therefore is particularly impacted by not belonging:

"Children are demoralised with no papers – they turn 18 and they are still thinking 'who am I?' as they have no real identity to help them think!"

(Director, Lawrence House)

The Director of Lawrence House shared the story of a girl, who felt she did not belong there. She felt this story was a good example of how Lawrence House uses a principle-led approach when responding to the very complex and challenging lifeworlds of the young people who come into their care.

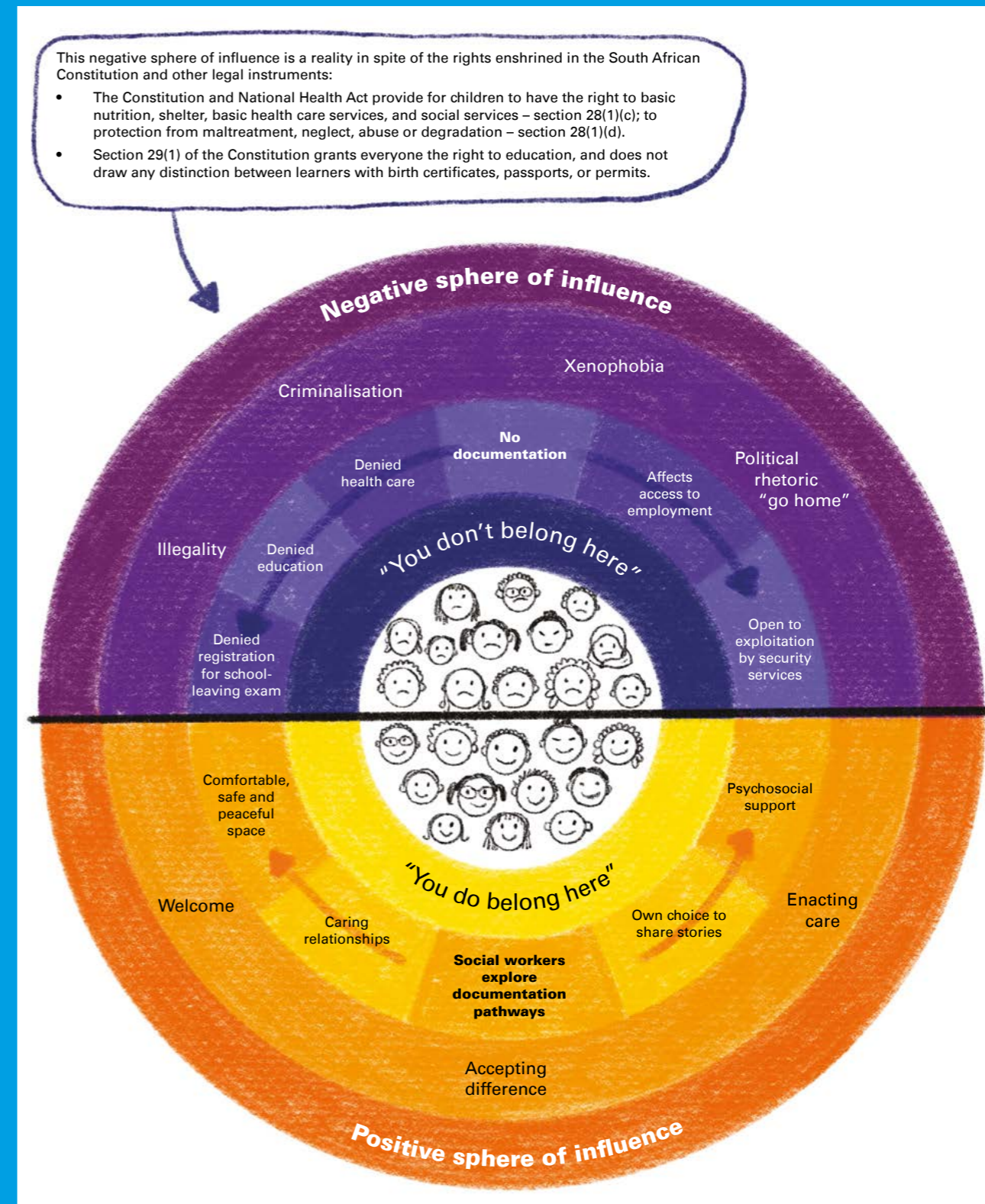
Sindile⁶ arrived at Lawrence House "wearing a skirt, boots, and an attitude." She had no real sense of who she was. She had no birth certificate or any other documentation, and no family that could be traced. She had come via a refugee camp in Malawi where she lived with an abusive aunt and uncle. She did not know her country of origin. Sindile's uncle brought her to South Africa for an arranged marriage with a much older man but after community members intervened she was taken to a place of safety in Pretoria and then to Lawrence House.

Over the years, Sindile had been forced to adopt many identities in order to survive. She had been a 'Muslim girl' in order to access services from a Muslim service organisation when she first arrived in South Africa. She had also played the role of 'child victim', in order to secure placement in a state registered facility. Her movement over time from one placement to another had resulted in the development of 'a tough survivor' identity, which meant she actively drove others away. By the time she arrived at Lawrence House she was 'the rebellious teenager' and felt she did not belong anywhere.

Lawrence House worked sensitively and carefully with Sindile. With love, care, and compassion she started trusting the adults around her and herself. She started to believe in who she was and who she wanted to become. With the support of Lawrence House, Sindile managed to complete school and decided to train to become a chef after her school-leaving exams. None of this would have been possible if she had not obtained documentation. She would not have been able to write the exams, register at chef school, or legally remain and 'settle' as an adult in the country.

Alongside the psychosocial support she received at Lawrence House, the Scalabrini Centre lawyers and social workers spent many years building a case for permanent residency based on the fact that she had been trafficked to South Africa through an arranged marriage when young. As a result of this process Sindile was granted permanent residency in South Africa. "Gaining legal status was a turning point for her, it allowed her to plan a future for herself. This confirmed for us the link between psychological identity and documentation. She still has struggles, but she is now confident, helpful, and returns to Lawrence House to cook for the children" (Director of Lawrence House).

What this story illustrates is how Scalabrini works across two competing spheres of influence to make sure children on the move 'belong'. The diagram below illustrates this approach in more detail.



6 Not her real name



UNICEF'S programming principles related to children on the move include equity-focussed programming with an emphasis on gender equality, a continuum of support across the migratory journey, inclusive care of all children on the move, and the participation of children (1). Each one of these is reflected in the example above. These principles should form the basis of all services for children on the move. What the Scalabrini Centre has done at Lawrence House is to interpret these principles in the context of 'belonging', bringing together legal rights and psychosocial wellbeing. This is an example of good practice that can be applied in many contexts. Whether children are in centres of care or in community care, service providers can build their interactions with children and families around the principle of belonging.

Example 2: Community-owned action for children on the move

Action Support Centre

The principle of community-owned programming as an alternative to the more traditional agency-owned programme approach has recently drawn growing attention at a global level from development and humanitarian organisations working in child protection (26). A community-owned approach is one where "community-owned and managed activities [are] initiated from within the community: The [outside] agency is a capacity builder and funder, and community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and also beneficiaries" (27). Research suggests that community-owned action for the care and protection of children can be more effective and sustainable than the more common model where an outside agency runs a child protection programme that comes to an end when the agency leaves the community.

The principles that inform the work of the Action for Conflict Transformation (ACT) are aligned with this growing global awareness of the power of community ownership. ACT defines its approach as one that emphasises the collective power of communities to create social cohesion in contexts of conflict and vulnerability, "it is only by linking individuals together that we can realise the collective potential and the power we know we have" (28).

Action for Conflict Transformation (ACT) is a non-profit organisation working in the field of conflict and development. It works with communities and their community-based organisations, as well as institutions and individuals that are committed to transform conflict and build peace and solidarity. ACT's work under the Best Practice Project was implemented in townships on the margins of Johannesburg where there is high unemployment, large areas of informal housing, widespread criminal conflict, and high levels of GBV (29). Under the Best Practice Project ACT focussed on

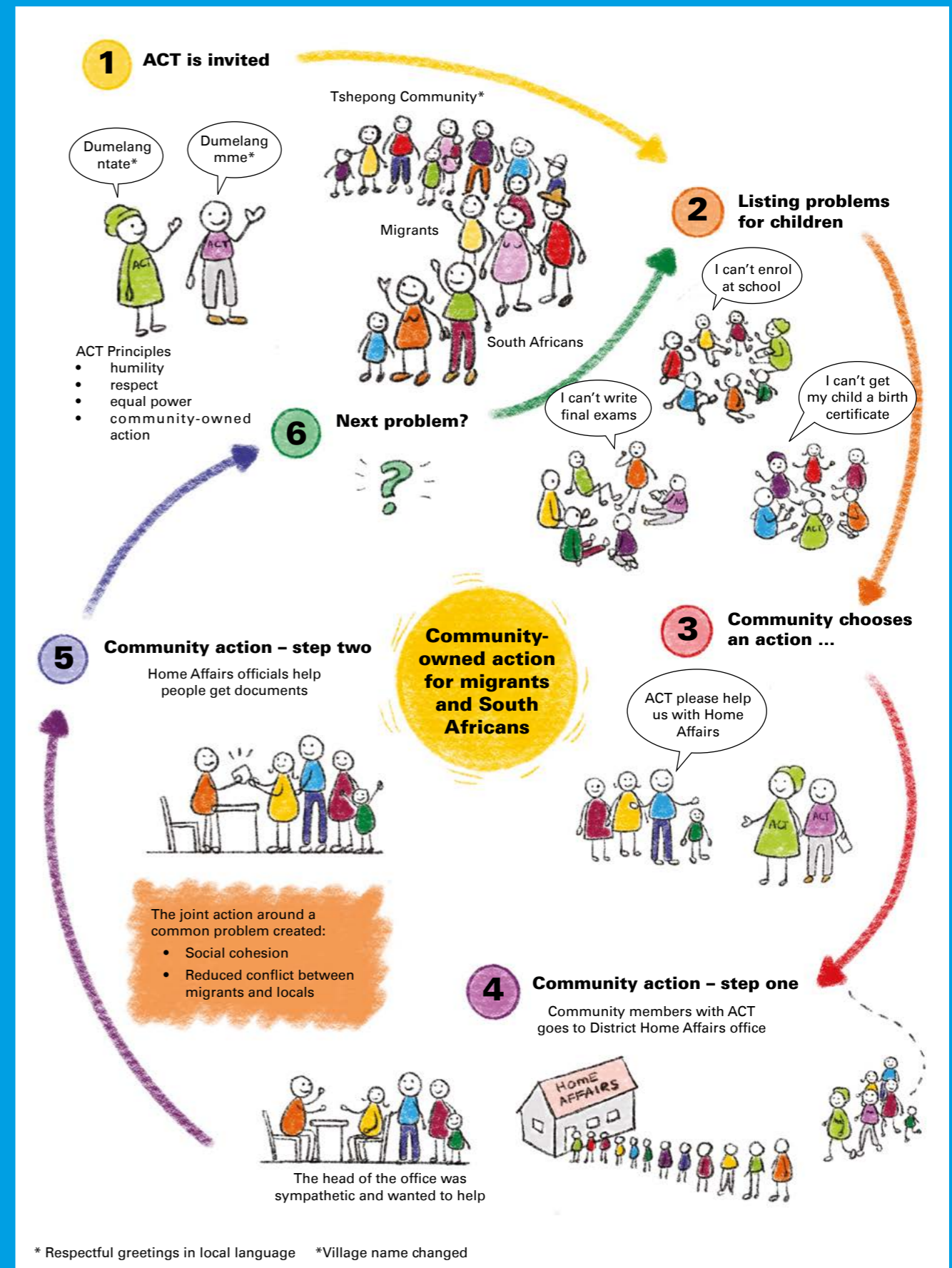
areas where large numbers of migrants live alongside South Africans. Their approach is based on the idea that in contexts of deep poverty there is more that unites South Africans and migrants than that which creates difference.

The diagram opposite describes the approach of ACT. It represents an actual example of work done in one community.⁷

The diagram shows how community mobilisers from ACT visited the community in a spirit of humility to offer their services to help the community solve challenges faced by children. They followed this visit with a facilitated community discussion with different groups (including migrants) that they held within the community. The community identified the challenges faced by children. One of these challenges was that many children are not registered at birth making it difficult for children to enrol in school and, if they do manage to enrol, they are unable to register for the final school-leaving examinations at the end of secondary school. ACT responded by supporting community members to contact the local Home Affairs office, where they formed a relationship with an official who was aware of the community's challenges and was willing to help them. He then worked to ensure that birth registration for children of parents born in South Africa to both South Africans and foreign-nationals could take place and children were not denied a birth certificate.

ACT described how the action process created a sense of social cohesion as migrants and South Africans recognised a shared problem, talked together through the challenge, and worked together on a shared solution. This was a starting point for the community who then continued to draw on this collective action to address other issues impacting everyone in the community.

⁷ The name of the community has been changed.



The hope is that this action paves the way for future actions even after ACT no longer provides support. The community will have identified the issues that tie them together rather than those that divide and strengthened their ability to work together to address these issues. This creates a strong foundation for proactive steps in addressing and solving problems.

While ACT recognises that many of the problems faced by such communities are historical, structural, and deeply entrenched in the inequalities that continue to challenge South Africa, change should not be unobtainable. By supporting community ownership small changes can build hope over time, as well as the social infrastructure required to affect larger change in the future.

A commitment to working alongside communities to support their own wellbeing is increasingly seen as an important approach (30) There are, however, few examples of the principle in practice (31). What ACT has done as part of the Best Practice Project is build their work around the principle of community-led action, giving other organisations an example of how 'it can be done'. What is important about the work that ACT has done in Tshepong is the fact that in their community-led approach they did not exceptionalise families and children on the move, but rather worked inclusively with locals and migrants. The resulting joint community action built social cohesion and reduced xenophobic conflict in the community. Though the example is a response to a particular context, the principles applied can be adapted in urban environments, refugee settlements, and other areas where families and children on the move live and work.



Conclusion

The examples given in this brief highlight ways in which principle-led practice is central to challenging contextual constraints and uniting key stakeholders in pursuing the vision of each partner organisation. This principle-led approach also drives a determination to navigate and mitigate the various barriers faced such as the difficulties children experience accessing documentation, which in turn impacts on whether they can attend school, can sit exams, and participate in 'normalising' routines that are critical for creating a sense of belonging.

The principles of belonging and of community ownership are essentially principles for honouring children's rights – the right to a name and nationality, to documentation, education, health, and protection. They are also integral to the principle of social justice based on the drive to actualise South Africa's Constitutional promise of dignity and human rights for all. The examples show that a focus on the child within their own context can shape short- and long-term practices that can respond to different needs and experiences and illuminate the importance of principle-led practice to drive responses that strengthen the support and protection of children on the move.

Key learnings related to the Best Practice Project intended outcomes

- Global principles of quality services that honour child rights should be the basis for work with children on the move, but it is important for local organisations to develop these principles in a contextually relevant way.
- The principles of belonging and community-led action are both applicable to different contexts and could inform the development of equitable, responsive services in other countries.
- Spending time on critical analysis and dialogue as an organisation around the principles that have emerged from local practice is enabling for service workers. It also provides guidance when difficult decisions have to be made in everyday work.

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