

# Young Leaders Took the Mic!

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## Young Leaders Took the Mic!

Earlier this month, we hosted our first Hold My Hand webinar where young voices didn't just speak: they led. Over 200 people joined us live to hear directly from teenagers, who called for real inclusion in decisions affecting their lives.

The session wasn't just talk. It was a loud, clear call to action for government, civil society and the private sector to step up for children and teens, especially when it comes to mental health, digital safety, and inclusive participation.



“Don't just hear us, implement what we are saying. Take real action. The only way we know you're truly listening is when we see change. We are tired of being part of discussions that lead nowhere.”

**Bontle Motatsa, 17**  
NSAAC Children & Adolescent Representative & RCI President, NW (2024)



“Most of the time, when children are in the media, it's people talking about us, not with us. We're saying: let children speak. Let it come from the child, not just from adults.”

**Gomolemo Poole, 17**  
Article 12, Web Ranger Ambassador



“We reminded our leaders that nothing for us, without us. So we need to be included in decision-making.”

**Dikgang Morudu, 19**  
Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament President 2023



“We want to be taken seriously, not just to be listened to, but actually be included in the decisions that affect our daily lives... the power to choose our path, the power to decide what to learn, who we want to be, and what kind of future we imagine ourselves in.”

**Seqobela Leboli, 17**  
Legacy Academy Alumni

[Watch the full webinar here](#)



**Dr Noxolo Gqada**

Strategy Lead  
Hold My Hand Accelerator

Moderator



**Prof Vernon Louw**

Executive Head of the  
Department of Medicine,  
Stellenbosch University



**Prof Kirsty Donald**

Deputy Director Neuroscience  
Institute, ECD Researcher, Dept. of  
Paediatrics and Child Health,  
UCT

# Hold My Hand Webinar



**4 June 2025**  
3pm - 4pm



**Iron: fuelling the brain &  
body for a better future**

## Let's Talk About Iron Webinar: 4 June, 3pm

Next up in the Hold My Hand webinar series is a deep dive into the link between iron and children's development. Iron isn't just a nutrient, it's a game changer for how children grow, learn and think.

### Speakers:

- \* **Prof Vernon Louw**, Executive Head of Medicine at Stellenbosch University
- \* **Prof Kirsty Donald**, Deputy Director at the Neuroscience Institute and ECD researcher at UCT
- \* **Dr Noxolo Gqada**, Strategy Lead at the Hold My Hand Accelerator (moderator)

This is a practical session filled with insights for NGOs, health professionals and policymakers alike.

[Register for the iron Webinar here](#)

## Child Protection Week

This week, we centre the voices of children and teenagers. Children and teens have told us in various engagements since 2024 that what they want is simple: to feel safe, be respected, and be part of the solutions. From the streets they walk to school on, to the homes and online spaces they live in, young people have been clear:

**“Don't blue tick us—our voices matter.”**

**“We want safe schools, safe homes, safe communities—and adults who care.”**

Their vision is one where:

- \* Schools are violence-free, clean and caring.
- \* Teachers and parents are trained in empathy, not just curriculum.
- \* Communities act when violence happen. Not just talk.
- Online spaces that are empowering, not dangerous.

**Child protection isn't optional. It's constitutional.**

[Read More](#)



# The Power of Speech

## Young Leaders Took the Mic!

The Hold My Hand Team held hands with children and the [Carel du Toit Centre](#) at the **Power of Speech** event in the Western Cape Provincial Parliament in April.

It was a powerful moment, when 10-year-old Blake Solomons stood up in front of the Health MEC, using the very same microphone the Premier uses. A small child, a big symbol: this is what it looks like when young children are given the tools to speak and to be heard.

This moment was more than ceremonial. It was a reminder that **thousands of babies in South Africa are born each year with hearing loss**, but most aren't screened at birth. And if children can't hear, how can we expect them to learn, speak, or thrive?

Blake, born profoundly deaf, is now a confident speaker thanks to early screening, smart hearing tech, and a family that never gave up. The Carel du Toit Centre showed what's possible when we **act early** and let children speak for themselves.

Mesuli Kama, Network Mobilisation Lead for Hold My Hand, made it clear:

**"We're not just supporting children. We're challenging the House to act. Newborn hearing screening must become a national priority, because every child deserves the power of speech."**

“



**Watch Full Power of Speech Event**

## Partner Updates

We're excited to shine a light on some of the amazing organisations in the growing Hold My Hand community. Each one brings fresh energy, practical know-how and a deep commitment to making South Africa a safer, kinder place for children and teens.



Backing entrepreneurs and social innovators tackling early childhood challenges.



A Swiss-based foundation working to close the nutrition gap in vulnerable communities across Africa and Asia.



A non-profit driving early childhood development in marginalised communities in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal



**KHANIMAMBA**  
TRAINING AND RESOURCE CENTRE

Helping children build strong foundations while creating jobs, growing social enterprises and boosting local economies.



Improving the lives of children and families across sub-Saharan Africa by combining capacity development, creative content, and the power of the arts.



Focusing on early childhood development, youth education and development, and rural assistance.



Showing God's love by protecting and developing children, empowering families, and enabling the community to thrive.



Improving school readiness and academic performance in South Africa's Foundation Phase by equipping children with essential language and thinking skills, supporting teachers on the ground.

**Join Our Community**

**Partners**



# What is happening in our community?



GroundUp Article:  
Grant to prevent  
malnutrition is in limbo

## Maternity Support Grant

This GroundUp article highlights how a small monthly grant during pregnancy could reduce low birth weight, promote breastfeeding, and strengthen early development outcomes. The maternity support grant (MSG) could be a game-changer: addressing maternal malnutrition and improving child health from day one. But right now, it's delayed.

Pregnant women can't afford to wait. Neither can we.

[Read Article](#)



## Reach Digital Health

Programmes like MomConnect and B-Wise by Reach Digital Health are powerful examples of how technology and language inclusion can improve health outcomes. MomConnect supports pregnant women and new mothers through SMS and WhatsApp, and is now available in all 11 official languages. B-Wise offers youth-friendly, confidential support on sexual and reproductive health via WhatsApp and social media. Their 2024 Annual Report, Innovating Health Equity, highlights these achievements and Reach's ongoing commitment to equitable, accessible healthcare for all.

[Download Annual Report](#)



## Real Reform for ECD welcomes the retention of R10bn in new funding to ECD programmes

The South African government has retained R10 billion in funding for early childhood development (ECD) in the 2025 budget. This is the largest ECD investment in the country's history and includes critical increases to subsidies, nutrition support, and infrastructure grants.

[Read Press Release](#)



## Rising Food Prices Highlight Urgent Need for FoodForward SA's Support

The latest household affordability index reveals a steep increase in the cost of staple foods, worsening South Africa's affordability crisis and pushing more families into hunger. As prices surge, food banks and community feeding schemes are becoming even more critical in bridging the gap and ensuring access to basic nutrition.

[Read More](#)



## Philani Maternal, Child Health and Nutrition Trust

This year, Philani's Mentor Mothers and teams continued to walk alongside thousands of families in the Eastern and Western Cape, offering care, connection, and hope. They are proud to share some highlights from the journey in their annual report.

[Read Annual Report](#)



## Artificial Intelligence for Impact Podcast

Tune in to the Do More Foundation Podcast and meet Ferdinand Steenkamp, co-founder of Tregter, using data to drive change for young children, communities, and non-profits. From unlocking education access to building a high-employment, data-smart nation, Tregter's mission is clear: tech that serves people.

[Tune In](#)



## Grow Great Annual Report

Grow Great has released its latest annual report, showcasing their continued impact in combating child stunting and promoting maternal and child health in South Africa. Dive into the report to explore the strides made and the journey ahead.

[Read Annual Report](#)



## Child Safeguarding in Practice Webinar

Save the Children and NASCEE invites the sector to attend this practical two-part webinar series empowering organisations to implement child safeguarding policies that protect children across all settings.

**10+17 June**

[Register for Webinar](#)

## Stay connected

Get the latest updates, inspiring stories, and ways to make a difference by following us on social media.

Together, we're creating a brighter future for South Africa's children and teens. Thank you for holding hands with us on this incredible journey.

Want to share your latest news?  
Drop an email at [news@holdmyhand.org.za](mailto:news@holdmyhand.org.za)



Together, we will **change** our future.

Thank you for being a vital part of our mission to put children at the center of our future. Your involvement makes all the difference!

