



# Progress, Play, and Policy!

August 2025

Issue No. 6

It's been a busy season for children and teens, on the field, in policy spaces, and in our communities. In this issue, we look back at the excitement of our Hear Me Out competition and share highlights from the rugby field.

We also unpack our latest policy brief on 'Advancing maternal and child health through Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation (MMS) in South Africa'.

Heavy drinking continues to harm families, communities, and especially young people. Our new guide about alcohol, written for teenagers, is a small step toward reducing those risks and protecting futures. Alongside this, we share insights from a literature review that asks tough but important questions: what's working, what isn't, and how can we do better to accelerate progress for the next generation.

At the heart of it all is our shared message: Hold My Hand. Together, let's make sure every child and teen in South Africa has the love, food, safety, and brain power they need to thrive.



## “We’re not just moody, we’re struggling”

More than 1 100 young South Africans have spoken through our national creative competitions, Hear Me Out and Keready to Ringa, sharing raw truths about mental health, identity, safety and the need to be heard. Their message is simple: “Don’t just tell us to speak. Make it safe for us to be heard.”

Our reports highlight their voices, alongside new insights on what it means to put children and teens at the centre of South Africa’s future.

[Read Reports](#)



# Advancing maternal and child health through Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation (MMS) in South Africa



## Policy Brief Spotlight Nourishing Mothers, Protecting Futures

Every day, 3 000 children are born in South Africa and their future health starts long before birth. Our latest policy brief explores how shifting from Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) to **Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation (MMS)** can transform maternal and child health. MMS is proven to reduce low birth weight, preterm births and stillbirths, and offers one of the best returns on investment in public health.

[Read the full policy brief](#)



# Let's talk about alcohol with children and teens

Alcohol harm isn't just an adult issue, it deeply affects unborn babies, children and teenagers too. From unsafe homes to school dropouts and even lives lost, the impact is real. Our new teen-friendly guide, *How South Africa Can Stop Hurting its Children by Reducing Heavy Drinking*, speaks directly to young people about alcohol, its risks, and how we can all rethink the role it plays in our lives.

[Read document](#)

To get the low-down on just how alcohol affects us, read the literature review, *Reducing Alcohol Harms to Children and Adolescents in South Africa: Evidence for Action*.

As champions for children, heavy drinking must become our problem too. As we head towards World Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) Day on the 8 September 2025, get up to speed on the proposal for Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) of alcohol.

[Learning Lunch Podcast](#)

[Read Op-Ed](#)



# News From Our Community



## Children lead the way at Wellington Stadium

Just before kick-off at a packed rugby stadium in Wellington on Sunday, 17 August, a group of 42 grade 1 children from Imboniselo Primary School and Laerskool Van Wyksvlei in the Boland took to the field to share one simple message: **Hold My Hand**. In a moment broadcast live on **SuperSport**, the children reminded thousands of viewers that building a stronger South Africa starts with walking alongside our youngest citizens. Activations like this bring the national campaign to life, and the Hold My Hand team is excited about future collaborations in sport to help spread the message even further.

[Watch Video](#)



## Early learning from birth to 3

On 19 August, a diverse group of sector experts were hosted by **Hold My Hand** and **DataDrive2030** in Cape Town for a dynamic, day-long workshop (*Towards measuring outcomes related to early learning - birth to 3 years*) focused on strengthening how outcomes in early learning from birth to three years are measured. The workshop tackled key data gaps, explored practical tools and indicators, and sparked rich conversations on how better measurement can support everyone, from researchers to those working directly with parents and caregivers.

Emerging resources will be shared with participants and follow-up workshops are planned. If you are interested in being involved, [please get in touch!](#)

[Expression of Interest Form](#)



## National launch of the Thrive by Five Index

Be part of the launch of **South Africa's most extensive survey of preschool child development**. The **Minister of Basic Education**, in partnership with **DataDrive2030**, will share the latest national findings, spotlight the factors shaping children's development, and outline where urgent action is needed.

**Date:** Monday, 08 September 2025

**Time:** 10h00 – 12h30 (SAST)

**Format:** MS Teams Webinar

**Keynote:** Minister of Basic Education, Hon. Siviwe Gwarube

[Register here](#)



## Caregivers need care too

Young children in South Africa stand at the cusp of immense potential, but too many begin life at a disadvantage. Over half of the children entering school each year are underprepared, placing their futures, and our nation's, at risk. In Mail & Guardian, Dr Shelley O'Carroll highlights the vital role of caregivers, mothers, grandmothers, and others, in supporting early learning at home through responsive, loving interaction known as **"serve and return"**.

Yet caregivers face overwhelming challenges: poverty, stress, limited services, and entrenched gender pressures, especially in the poorest households, where many caregivers bear invisible burdens with scant support.

Despite this, a growing number of local organisations are stepping up, supporting caregiver wellbeing, coaching on play and reading, and broadening involvement from grandmothers to fathers.

[Read Op-Ed](#)

# Our Community

## Meet some of our new community members!

We're growing, and it's beautiful to see more hearts and hands joining the journey.



### Ripples for Change

Ripples for Change is committed to empowering rural and semi-urban communities in South Africa, with a particular focus on the Eastern Cape Province.



### The Hands

Helping All Nations Develop Strong (HANDS) is a dedicated non-profit organisation committed to the holistic development of youth and the upliftment of communities.



### Ntataise

Ntataise empowers women through Early Childhood Development (ECD) training. They support communities through our networks and outreach programmes, and serve children through improving the reach and quality of ECD provision.

[Join Our Community](#)



## 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!