



# A Wake-Up Call to Listen, Act and Include Children

September 2025

Issue No. 7

This September we spotlighted the real voices of families and experts who joined **Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI)**, **Side-by-Side** and **Hold My Hand** in calling for universal newborn hearing checks and why this simple test can change a child's life as part of Deaf Awareness Month.

Earlier this month we published our latest alcohol policy brief diving into solutions to reduce alcohol harm, a barrier to safety and development.

You'll also read about a powerful storytelling exchange hosted by **Nal'ibali** that brought children together through sound and South African Sign Language, reminding us how connection can cross any barrier.

As the push for zero-rating of PBO websites gains momentum, we celebrate the steps being taken to make essential information on health, education and jobs freely accessible to all.

Finally, global health leaders, including **UNICEF**, **WHO** and the **Anaemia Action Alliance** are raising the alarm on anaemia, urging fast, integrated action to protect the progress made and push it further.

Warmly,  
**The Hold My Hand Team**

## Early hearing screening

**Hold My Hand**, **CHAI** and **Side-by-Side** jointly hosted a 60-minute conversation about why hearing checks in the first weeks of life can change everything for a child. September is Deaf Awareness month and in this webinar we heard directly from caregivers raising children with hearing loss and the experts on why universal newborn screening is a must and we learnt practical ways to weave hearing checks into existing services.

If you're curious to hear what families and experts are saying about this topic check out these recent interviews from our hearing screening awareness campaign that included interviews from HearX Foundation, Hi Hopes and the Centre for Deaf Studies at Wits, [SAfm](#), [Lotus FM](#), [CapeTalk](#) and [OFM](#)



▶ Watch Webinar



# How South Africa can stop hurting its children: **The Prevention of Alcohol Harms**

## Alcohol policy brief

Heavy drinking harms more than just the person drinking, it affects children and teenagers across South Africa. This policy brief explores how alcohol fuels violence, trauma, and neglect in homes and communities, and outlines the steps needed to protect young lives. It's a call for urgent action to reduce alcohol harm and create safer, healthier spaces for children to grow and thrive.

[Read the full policy brief](#)

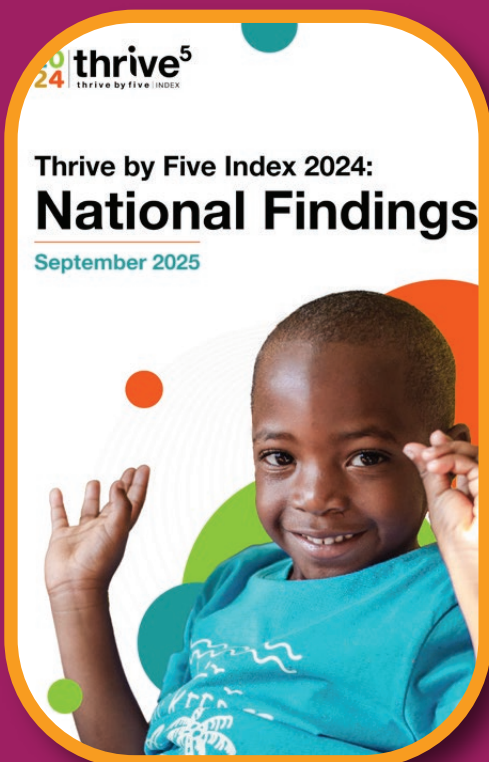
## Why Thrive by Five is important for Hold My Hand

The recently launched **Thrive by Five** 2024 Index by **DataDrive2030** is a wake-up call. It shows that too many South African children are not reaching the developmental milestones they need by the age of five. And when a child falls behind early, it becomes much harder to catch up.

That's why many of us in the Hold My Hand community are putting early childhood development front and centre. Together, we're calling for urgent action: better nutrition, support for parents, stronger ECD services, and more investment in brain-building activities from birth.

Read the Thrive by Five report and see why we must act now to give every child the start they deserve.

[Read document](#)



# News From Our Community



## Bhekisisa

In 2023, DGMT's CEO David Harrison penned an op-ed that argued that food producers and government could team up to cut the price of ten staples, like maize meal, beans and eggs – by up to 20%. The idea grabbed attention, sparking debates at treasury, the presidency and Nedlac, and making headlines across TV and radio.

With three in ten children stunted from poor nutrition, the “ten best buys” plan put child hunger on the national agenda. A year later, ahead of the 2024 elections, Harrison challenged politicians again and called out an industry still slow to change.

Bhekisisa maps the progression in this article and video.

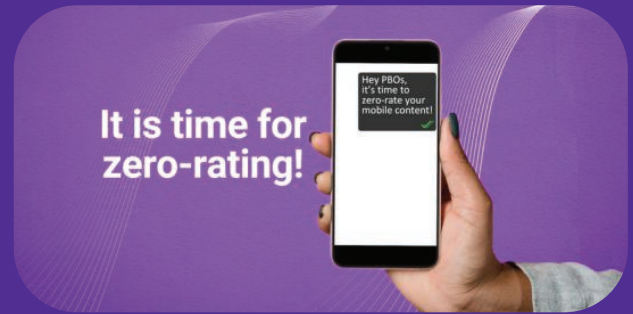
[Learn More](#)



## Nal'ibali bridges language barriers

During National Literacy Month, Nal'ibali hosted a unique storytelling exchange between the Engedi ECD Centre in Mitchell's Plain and The Dominican School for the Deaf. More than 40 children took part in joint reading and play-based activities, with stories shared in both English and South African Sign Language. The event not only promoted a love of literacy but also fostered understanding, connection and appreciation for different ways of learning and communicating.

[Learn More](#)



## Zero-rating

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!](#)

[Apply for zero-rating](#)



## A call to act on anaemia

With global aid cuts threatening health and nutrition gains, the Anaemia Action Alliance is urging an integrated response. In a new blog, co-authored by Saskia Osendarp (Micronutrient Forum) and global partners from WHO, UNICEF and others, they highlight the need to prioritise proven, cost-effective strategies that can be delivered through shared platforms like antenatal care, schools and community services. Tackling anaemia this way will improve health, boost development and help keep progress towards the SDGs on track.

[Read More](#)



# 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.



### DataDrive2030

Helping to build a country where every child has the kind of early life experiences that set them up for success, by mobilising data to enable greater access to better quality early learning opportunities for all children by 2030.



### Womandla

Womandla Foundation is a women-led non-profit working to close the gender gap across Africa by 2030. Its mission is to educate, empower and equip 50 000 women and girls through strategic pillars: mentorship, STEAM, entrepreneurship and development.



### RX Radio

Amplifying the voices of South African children and give them real influence over the issues that shape their lives. At RX Radio, 172 Child and Young Reporters, ranging from four to 18 years old, are already leading the way.

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!