

## PRESS RELEASE

### 26<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2015 - CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

The National Adoption Coalition of South Africa (NACSA) is pleased to announce the launch of Courage, an innovative child protection community engagement programme aimed at empowering communities to identify and solve their child protection challenges. Courage was developed through a partnership between NACSA, the Swedish Foundation for Children without Parental Care (Föräldraslösa barn) and project leader Dee Blackie, a child protection and change management specialist.

Courage is a picture based programme that uses posters, maps and a range of interactive training material to assist child protection officers, organisations, families and individuals to engage around the issues they face in their communities. It helps participants to recognise the rights and needs of children, to identify and prioritise their child protection challenges and then gives them the strategies and tools they need to solve them. The material can be used for a range of different purposes including:

1. Prevention Programmes: Communication and awareness; advocacy; and capacity building.
2. Early Intervention: Sex, conception & pregnancy awareness; option counselling for crisis pregnancy; strategies for positive parenting; and individual or community empowerment.
3. Statutory Intervention: Child abandonment management, counselling of parents & children, court preparation; and stakeholder management.
4. Child Placement: Alternative care solutions; and adoption counselling.

“We decided to call the programme ‘Courage’ as we wanted to develop it as a positive and inspiring ‘ingredient’ in any community or child protection organisation. When we asked social workers, psychologists, teachers, healthcare practitioners and police, all of them said they needed courage to deal with the child protection challenges that they face every day, and with that the brand was born”, explains Dee Blackie, global project leader.

Work on Courage started a year ago, when AdoptionCentrum Sweden secured funding to assist with the development of a holistic child protection programme that could be used throughout their global network. Christina Gibson of Föräldraslösa barn explains their motivation for partnering with NACSA: “We wanted a toolkit that could be used anywhere in the world, that was user friendly and could help with capacity building of our stakeholders. This tool would also need to strengthen the knowledge, attitude and skills of duty bearers to apply a legally secure caretaking system for children without parental care or at risk, and we believe Courage is just that toolkit”.

“Many child protection programmes are reactive and only serve to solve problems that already exist”, says Katinka Pieterse, Chair of NACSA, “the beauty of the Courage programme is that it focusses on proactive and preventative solutions”. “Courage is aligned to Global, African and South African children’s rights declarations, and it also makes the implementation of the South African Children’s Act very practical and easy to apply,” adds Pieterse.

South Africa has 18.6 million children, which represents 36% of our total population. Over a million children are born every year, however, they face a number of challenges. Violence and violence-related injury is amongst the highest in the world in South Africa and is deeply embedded in our culture due to our troubled past. The dominance of patriarchy in our communities tends to devalue the role of women and children, which has led to very high levels of domestic violence and abuse. Social services lack the capacity to deal with many of the child protection challenges that they are faced with and poverty and inequality continues to hamper the majority of South African children’s development and growth.

Courage has been developed on the principle that all child protection challenges stem from some form of disempowerment. It identifies 35 distinct child protection challenges, and all of these can be summarised into seven ‘disempowerment themes’ (please see our fact sheet for detail on this). These themes include societal violence and inequality, exploitation, low self-esteem, abuse, addiction, ignorance and neglect. However, for each of these disempowerment themes, there is an equally strong empowerment tool that Courage uses to drive a change in behaviour. These empowerment tools include developing community values or a belief set, strengthening community partnerships, building self-esteem, encouraging love and empathy, harnessing leadership, growing knowledge and turning strategies into tangible action and delivery.

The Courage brand identity was developed by Circle Design and the interactive training material by Trainiac, a picture based training consultancy. The engagement programme was piloted in South Africa, Zambia and Lesotho in March of this year with child protection experts in each country. Knowledge and insight was collected from representatives of government, social development, NGO’s, safety and security, health and education. The material was refined based on these pilot workshops and the final toolkit is now available for downloading at [www.couragechildprotection.com](http://www.couragechildprotection.com), a printed version can also be purchased at cost price.

“Everyone has a role to play in the protection of our children, but often the challenges seem too great and the solutions too complex to enact real change” explains Blackie. “Courage is a practical toolkit that empowers individuals, families and organisations to develop and implement simple yet effective child protection programmes in any unique environment, we call it empowered care”.

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