

Universal Children's Day is for ALL Children

Universal Children's Day is an opportunity to create awareness on the importance of all children, including those living with a disability and to reflect on where society has failed them, says Lusito School principal, Deolinda Molina.

"As we celebrate Universal Children's Day on November 20, let us remember that children are the future leaders of our world and only with our guidance, care, and nurturing, can they positively change our society. Unfortunately, children living with disabilities are often not seen or are forgotten in the eyes of society," says Molina.

The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities establishes that children with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments should enjoy the same human rights and freedoms as other children. The Convention further explains, in all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration, with children living with disabilities having the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them.

The purpose of Universal Children's Day is to highlight the progress being made towards the realisation and promotion of rights of children, whilst the South African government also declared the first Saturday of November as National Children's Day, aimed at protecting them against abuse and violence.

But Molina says the lived reality of children living with disabilities is far from ideal.

"Due to the lack of data and research on child disability, not only in this country, but the world as a whole, the creation of effective policies and programmes that could be aimed at bettering the children's lives is lacking. Add to that the stigma they have to put up with, and lack of infrastructure and resources that make navigating everyday life that much more difficult," Molina explains.

Molina further explains that violence against children has a severe impact on South Africa's economy.

"A report by Save the Children, says that the estimated economic value of disability-adjusted life years lost due to violence against children (including fatal and non-fatal) in 2015 totalled R202 billion."



To lessen the load children living with disabilities faced, and create a conducive environment where learners could feel accepted, the Lusito Association, in 1979 launched the Lusito School, an establishment committed to improving the lives of differently abled children, with a mission of equipping each learner with the best possible skills to allow them to effectively progress through their lives.

“As Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF said: ‘All children have hopes and dreams including children with disabilities. All children deserve a fair and just opportunity to transform their dreams into a reality’. The Lusito School is but one entity, government has a huge onus to draft up and implement policies that will ensure all children are carted and cared for in South Africa, including children living with disabilities,” Molina concludes.

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