

## **SOWC Launch: Young People's Report:**

### **GEM Girls take action to help themselves and other children**

Dear UNICEF,

My name is Sonwabiso Fanta and I come from the Eastern Cape. I am from King William's Town; to be precise I am from Dimbaza (a location near King). I am 16 years old and I am going to STD 9 this year. I am in a youth group called the Girls Education Movement Eastern Cape and I am also its president.

In December 2004 I attended a function hosted by UNICEF in partnership with the Premier's office, Office on the rights of the Child under the leadership of Mrs. Farida Casoojee from the Eastern Cape. It was the launch of the State of World's Children's report. We were the Program Directors of this prestigious event as we were part of the GEM launch programme in the Eastern Cape.

This was a very important day for us, as the youth, because we were actually the **VIP's** of the day and we were treated with respect. We were able to express our views towards certain mind-boggling issues, which needed to be addressed. Such issues were; **child trafficking, sexual abuse, the lack of a.r.v's** in our local clinics and the list is long. We were able to voice our opinions and the people in the panel answered our questions fully and they left us with little confusion or none at all.

There were also children from the street kid's organizations, places of safety etc. These kids were involved in different crime activities and had been in jail. Due to their age they were housed in place of safety. When interacting with them they now regret what had happen to them and have learnt their lesson. Most of them committed themselves to refrain from such bad activities again. They want to go back home and go back to school. They were even asked what they intend to be in future. Some said they want to be police men, and women, some want to be social workers, some want to be Doctors, nurses etc. This means that the event made a very good impact in their lives.

Though the day was a success in all spheres, we were given shocking statistics about the infringement of our rights all over Africa such as the rights to clean water, education, sanitation, nutrition etc. It is alarming to know the number of children who are suffering due to infringement of their rights. The sad thing is that we are given these rights through our national constitutions and through various other frameworks, but most of all, we are given our rights by the **Convention of the Rights of Children** which has been ratified by almost all the countries of the world therefore we, as children, should be enjoying more or less the same type of rights but unfortunately this is not so.

The launch was a success and [it] goes without saying how effective it was. We were graced with the presence of many prestigious people whose caliber can not be disputed., such as the Premier of our province Mrs. Nosimo Balindlela, MEC for Education Mr. M. Matomela, MEC for Finance Mr. De Wit and MEC for the Department of Welfare Mrs. Neo Mamase, Superintendent General for Welfare Mr. Mabentsele, Superintendent General for Safety and Security Mr. T. Mafanya and many other dignitaries attended.