

## **A COUNTRY FIT FOR CHILDREN**

As a people we are continually being confronted with child murders, abductions and abuse. At this very moment in time the nation is gripped with the awful facts relating to the Norton bay murder. What is being done about these things and what do we do to prevent these things from happening in the future?

The only way that the State can respond is through the development of legislation that can be implemented to all spheres of government. Such legislation has in fact been passed on a national level and will now deal with all matters relating to children on a national scale.

Important issues such as virginity testing and forced customary male circumcision have been addressed. No girl under the age of 16 years of age may be subject to any virginity testing. Furthermore if a girl submits to such a test it must be done privately and no outward markings may be put on her.

Customary male circumcision has been banned and can only take place if the boy is 18 years old. This however does not apply to circumcision that relates to religious practises. At last we will have fewer boys being killed or crippled for life as a result of botched circumcisions and the dignity of young girls will now be protected particularly those who have been victims of rape.

Before this new act can be properly implemented proper regulations must first be drawn up and once they have been accepted then the act can take effect. You as the reader must also bear in mind that there is a cost attached to all legislation and in the case of this particular act the financial implications must still be presented to parliament for discussion and approval.

All of this is but the start of a long road relating to the protection of children as we will soon be faced with draft legislation regarding how children's issues will be dealt with at a provincial and at a local government level.

Issues such as child labour, street children and child abuse will be addressed and here I would call on you to be prepared to give your input on things that impact on the lives of our children. These issues will be presented in this newspaper so that you can take note and then react accordingly.