

Speech on behalf of
Civil Society Organisations and Networks
at the
Re-Launch of RightStart Namibia
by Ms. Nicolette Bessinger, Lifeline/Childline Namibia

Windhoek, 7 August 2025

Morning Everyone

Special Greetings from the Civil Society Organizations to our Honorable Vice-President of Namibia, Madam Lucia Witbooi, and our distinguished guests and everyone present.

I want to acknowledge the protocol already established.

On behalf of the Namibian Civil Society Organisations, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations), (Community-Based Organisations) and (Faith-Based Organisations) who work with young children and those who care for them, I wish to express our sincere gratitude for the joint efforts to revive RightStart Namibia. I also want to reaffirm our ongoing commitment to Right Start as a programme under NDP6 and beyond.

The **challenges we face in our society**, and which affect us the most during our childhood, come in the form of violence, abuse, trauma, mental health, malnutrition. This resulted in a lack of development around literacy, numeracy, creative and systemic thinking, social skills, empathy, and emotional intelligence.

These challenges are **systemic and intergenerational**, which is why it is important to not operate in silos or have merely 1-2 years long programs and interventions, but to collaborate and work on solutions that will be around for 30+ years, so that those who benefited from them as children will still have access to the same kind of resources and support as parents for their own children.

In our view, **RightStart has the potential** to be such a **long-term solution** and to serve as an ideal overarching framework for providing the type of support that young children and those who care for them need, in terms of Early Childhood Education, Parenting, Child Protection, and good Nutrition for the right start into their lives.

In this regard, Right Start will offer a much-needed **platform for sharing resources** and collaborate on these issues. It will help us to identify synergies, to build on each other's achievements, and to complement each other.

In addition to individual Civil Society Organisations involved in Right Start now and in future, there are also **Sectoral Civil Society Networks**, such as the **Namibian Child Rights Network – in the process of being revived (NCRN)** and the **Nutrition and Food Security Alliance of Namibia (NAFSAN)**.

These **Sectoral Networks** aim to enhance coordination, help to share information, and identify areas of collaboration amongst each other. **In addition**, these networks also serve to establish new and strengthen existing working relationships with other stakeholders, i.e. Government Ministries, International Development Partners, Academic Institutions, as well as the Namibian Private Sector.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge and thank all fellow CSOs who actively participated in the revival of RightStart Namibia and who express their commitment and dedication to remain drivers and reliable partners on this journey:

(in alphabetical order)

- Church Alliance for Orphans (CAFO)
- Development Workshop Namibia (DWN)
- IntraHealth
- KAYEC
- Lifeline/Childline Namibia (LLCL)
- Nutrition and Food Security Alliance of Namibia (NAFSAN)
- Palms for Life Namibia (PFL)
- Side by Side Namibia – Early Intervention Centre
- Women’s Action for Development (WAD)

In addition to those I mentioned, we highly appreciate the work and ongoing contributions from DAPP Namibia and SOS Children’s Village, and we welcome and appreciate the many more NGOs, CBOs and FBOs who work tirelessly on the ground as part of a strong Civil Society in support of Right Start Namibia.

We look forward to working together with the whole range of stakeholders and supporters of Right Start Namibia, to make sure that every Namibian child’s start, is the right start!

Thank you for the opportunity be part of this great Partnership to positively contribute the lives of our Children in Namibia.