



**NEWSLETTER OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 2026**



**Your children need your presence more than your presents**

**- Jesse Jackson**

## A MESSAGE OF CARE FROM DUDU SKHOSANA CHAIRPERSON – SAPPIN BOARD



### Recognising and Responding to Burnout

As we reach the end of the year, I want to offer this piece as my personal gift to every member of the SAPPIN community—practitioners, researchers, programme managers, funders, and government partners. I've spent many years in the NPO sector as a social worker, and I know how much invisible labour goes into building safer families and supporting the wellbeing of children in South Africa. Every one of you carries a part of that responsibility, whether you're in a community hall, in a community, or a policy meeting.

I want to wish you a blessed Christmas. And I want to say something clearly: **you can only pour into others when you're not running on empty yourself.**

We work in a country where violence—especially gender-based violence—takes a heavy toll on families and communities. Those of us who push for change from different angles feel that weight. We all carry the emotional demands of this field, even if it shows up in different ways.

My message this December is simple: **take care of yourself.** Not later. Not when things “calm down”. Now. Your wellbeing is part of the work. Your rest is part of the strategy.

## **Early warning signs of burnout**

Burnout doesn't arrive suddenly. It grows quietly. I've seen it in colleagues, and I've felt it myself. The signs usually show up long before we admit them.

### **1. Physical signs**

- Exhaustion that sleep doesn't fix
- Headaches, tension, stomach discomfort
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much

### **2. Emotional signs**

- Feeling numb, sensitive, or easily irritated
- Losing your usual patience
- Feeling discouraged or overwhelmed

### **3. Behavioural signs**

- Pulling away from colleagues or loved ones
- Losing motivation for work that once mattered
- Struggling to focus or make decisions

### **4. Relational signs**

- Feeling disconnected from families or teams
- Getting frustrated more quickly
- Feeling like you have nothing left to give

These aren't signs of failure. They are warnings—your body and mind asking for attention.

## **What to do when you notice these signs**

These grounding practices are simple, cost nothing, and can be done anywhere. They help regulate the nervous system and reset your emotional balance.

### **1. Slow breathing with a longer exhale**

Try inhaling for 4 counts and exhaling for 6.

Do 5–8 cycles.

### **2. Ground your senses**

Use the 4–3–2–1 method:

- 4 things you see
- 3 you can touch
- 2 you can hear
- 1 you can taste

### **3. Gentle movement**

Stretch, walk, roll your shoulders. Let your body release the tension it's been holding.

### **4. Stillness**

One minute of quiet breathing does more than we give it credit for.

### **5. Supportive touch**

Hand on your heart or belly.

A quiet internal reminder: *I am safe. I am supported.*

## **6. Soften your eyes**

Relax your gaze, jaw, and forehead.

## **7. Connect**

Burnout grows in silence. Healing grows in honest conversations.

### **You deserve care, too**

Those of us who work in child protection, parenting support, community development, and policy all share the same goal: safer homes, stronger families, and a country where children can grow up without fear. But we cannot sustain this work if we neglect ourselves.

As you close this year, please treat your wellbeing as essential—not optional. Rest. Replenish. Let others hold you the way you hold so many.

When we take care of ourselves, we show up stronger for the families and communities we serve.

When we show up stronger, our work has more impact.

And when children are safer, South Africa takes one step closer to the future we all want.

Thank you for everything you've done this year.

May this festive season bring you peace, rest, and renewal.

With care,

**Dudu Skhosana**

Chairperson, SAPPIN Board

## **SAPPIN MEETING**





As the year draws to a close, members of the SAPPIN gathered in Cape Town on 16 & 17 October for a meaningful two-day meeting hosted by Life Choices. The gathering provided a warm space to connect, reflect on progress, and consider where the network is headed in 2026 as we continue championing parenting support across South Africa.

We were pleased to welcome three new organisations—CECD, Shine for Hope Developers, and Midlands Community College—into the network. Their participation broadens the collective experience and strengthens our shared commitment to family wellbeing.

Members reflected on SAPPIN's involvement in the GIZ Violence Prevention for Peaceful and Inclusive Communities project. The initiative focuses on strengthening early intervention services for children aged 0–12 in areas experiencing high levels of violence.

Tales of Turning shared key findings from their social-media listening research. Analysis of online conversations revealed harmful narratives around single mothers, gender stereotypes among young people, and increasing online violence. The research highlighted the need for digital literacy education, more youth-focused interventions, and programming rooted in colloquial, culturally relevant language. Read the social media listening research into gender norms amongst youth [here](#) and watch a [webinar recording here](#).

Members reviewed a draft Monitoring and Evaluation framework for parenting programmes across the 0–18 life course. The framework aims to create shared indicators, support learning, and improve engagement with government stakeholders. More on this exciting project in our next newsletter.

The network identified priority areas for 2026, including leadership development, shared learning spaces, improved governance support, and building a central resource hub. Free2Grow also updated members on facilitator development and plans for a new workplace-based pilot with In2Food.

As we step into 2026, the network remains committed to supporting parents, strengthening families, and contributing to systems that nurture every child in South Africa.

## **SAPPIN DRIVER GROUP – A SEASON OF CHANGE**

### **Reflections from Suzan Eriksson**



As I finish my time in the Driver Group, I've gained insights that resonate deeply with SAPPIN's vital position within the local South African realities and globally in family strengthening, early childhood development, and violence prevention. The network has evolved significantly as a collaborative platform. Under the steady leadership of Wilmi Dippenaar, SAPPIN's Board and Driver Group have been navigating increasingly complex waters—a diverse range of activities testing our capacity to consolidate expertise and ensure a coherent direction. The time has come to focus our efforts strategically. Even as South Africa's overall environment improves, families remain marginalised in policy conversations. When funding and attention shift to other pressing priorities, they risk being left behind. The work ahead—streamlining SAPPIN's focus to ensure maximum impact—will be the priority.

SAPPIN has always championed thinking beyond prescriptive programming. We understand that culture, identity, and socio-economic context matter. Using research to inform practice while honouring the lived experience of frontline workers and professionals has been a priority. These commitments will elevate SAPPIN to new heights in the coming years.

Yet the network's greatest strength lies in its members and the relationships we have built. Trust and friendship have sustained us through challenges. As SAPPIN matures, addressing the difficult realities of organisational growth via a vis volunteerism, shared resource allocation and knowledge become essential. These conversations are uncomfortable but necessary. They represent exactly the kind of dialogue that breaks the status quo and catalyses systemic change. Systems won't transform themselves. We must take the step.

I wish the new Driver Group inspiring moments and continued success as they guide SAPPIN forward on this important journey.

## **SAPPIN DRIVER GROUP – A SEASON OF CHANGE**

### **Looking Ahead by Jamie-Lee**



A new beginning often reminds me of the growing edge analogy, representing a point of challenge that, when pushed, leads to personal growth and a new level of capacity. I am indeed looking forward to getting started and collaborating with you all as we advance and grow the work of the SAPPIN network in improving outcomes for children and families across South Africa as a whole through the systems strengthening model.

As a social worker during formation, we are constantly reminded of the importance of a strength-based approach in working with children and families, that everyone has inherent strengths and capabilities, and that if we use these strengths, we will truly be able to improve the outcome of the children and families in South Africa. I am very privileged and honoured to be part of a network that is underpinned by the same values and principles.

I am particularly excited to be more involved in the following components and to add to this my body of skills, experiences and expertise that I have gained over the past years:

Component 1: Psychosocial Support for Frontline Worker Wellbeing in order that support to families is strengthened

Component 2: Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) Systems

Component 5: Community of Practice and Other Workshop Facilitation

These components are very important to me as I have had first-hand experiences of the impact this has on both frontline workers and children and families, and therefore look forward to collaborating more on how we may strengthen these components for the network and all its different parts and systems.

It is also important to reflect on where SAPPIN has landed both in a South African context and globally in the work of wellbeing and violence prevention. It is indeed transformative to advocate boldly for the work in prioritising outcomes for children and families in a violence-free society, and what all our collective responsibilities are in ensuring that our programmes adequately address violence in all its forms and how we can all work towards safer, violence-free outcomes for those children and families in our care.

In the same way, we must also relook at the culture of working from a place of lack as South Africans and how most of us have made this an acceptable culture, especially in our sector. I am therefore looking forward to, alongside you all, advocating strongly for the wellbeing of frontline workers and that we must step up on our initiatives and approaches to Psychosocial Support for Frontline Workers in order that we continue to support families.

Lastly, as I conclude, I wanted to remind all of us of what allows a strengthening system model to operate at its best, and Prophet Khalil Gibran articulates it perfectly:

“Work is love made visible. And if you can't work with love, but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of the people who work with joy.”

So let us always try and do our work with love, so that the children and families in our care may truly experience the essence of love made visible.

Buckle up! We are about to embark on some new adventures within the SAPPIN space.

**Love, peace and joy to all during the holiday season.**

## **GLIMMERS OF POSSIBILITY: REFLECTIONS FROM THE UMGUNGUNDLOVU EARLY CHILDHOOD DIALOGUE**





On 29 October, the Families4Children partnership in KwaZulu-Natal hosted the uMgungundlovu District Early Childhood Dialogue. The gathering brought together ECD practitioners, community organisations, local leadership, parents and government departments to explore how the district can better support young children and the adults who care for them.

The Dialogue aimed to develop a shared understanding of the five domains of the Nurturing Care Framework, showcase and map existing services in uMgungundlovu, and identify gaps affecting young children and their caregivers. A clear thread ran through the presentations and discussions: **families are central to children’s development and when districts invest in creating supportive, inclusive environments for families, children thrive.**

Some of the most powerful moments in the dialogue came from participants’ reflections. Throughout the day, people captured “glimmers” — brief flashes of insight that surfaced when something resonated, felt true or hopeful. These glimmers revealed a district deeply committed to strengthening the foundations of nurturing care.

Many participants spoke about the importance of “*seeing children become children again – to play, to have fun and learn with joy.*” Others highlighted the need for stronger relationships between ECD centres and families, emphasising that when parents/caregivers are welcomed, informed and supported, children benefit. One glimmer captured it simply: “*We need to value caregivers as partners.*”

This emphasis on partnership echoed across the room. Participants named how responsive caregiving — the everyday moments of noticing, guiding, playing and comforting — is strengthened when the ecosystem around families is functioning well. They also described the pressures that make caregiving harder: limited resources, fragmented services and gaps in support for children with special needs. Alongside these concerns came hopeful suggestions: more coordinated

interdepartmental engagement, safe play spaces and more intentional involvement of families in early learning.

Families4Children is a collaboration between dIalanathi, Thandanani Children's Foundation and Singakwenza Early Childhood Education. A key focus of the partnership is enhancing **parental engagement in responsive care and opportunities for early learning within the home**. Through district-level advocacy community-based programmes and research, Families4Children aims to build an enabling environment where families feel recognised and supported as vital role players in early childhood development.

A summary of the Dialogue's insights will be shared with stakeholders, and Families4Children will continue working with district structures to integrate recommendations into planning processes. But perhaps the deepest contribution of the Dialogue was the reminder that nurturing care grows in relationship — between practitioners and caregivers, communities and services, districts and families. As one participant wrote, *"More collaboration, because we are learning."* The Dialogue marked an encouraging step in learning how to work together so that every young child can flourish.



## FROM CRISIS TO CONNECTION: PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS BRIDGING RESEARCH AND REALITY WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA'S SOCIAL CHALLENGES



We're excited to share the launch of *From Crisis to Connection: Participatory Workshops Bridging Research and Reality Within South Africa's Social Challenges*. This Fatherhood Booklet brings together the analysis from the 2024 research and the insights gathered through SAPPIN's fatherhood work.

The booklet shows how intentional, well-designed participatory workshops and communities of practice can create real spaces for confronting the pressures families and communities navigate every day. These methods work across sectors and open the door for honest conversations that usually sit below the surface. It also unpacks the realities of fatherhood and masculinity in South Africa's diverse context.

By bringing research and practice into alignment, the booklet highlights lived experiences and the nuances that often go unseen—offering a clearer picture of what fathers, families, and practitioners are dealing with on the ground.

We're pleased to introduce this work to the wider SAPPIN community and look forward to the conversations it sparks.

<https://sappin.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/SAPPIN%20Fatherhood%20Booklet.pdf>

## **REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION – A LAYER OF CONTAINMENT**

*Katharine Frost - Reflective supervisor and trainer*

Regular Reflective Supervision and Reflective Consultation has been part of the SAPPIN offering to members organisations and Community of Practice partners over the past 3 years.

This invaluable space provides participants with the opportunity to explore and reflect upon, in a group setting, those aspects of our work that are a challenge. The groups provide a holding space to share and think about what we have called 'sticky' things at work. The metaphor of 'sticky' has been an important one as it conveys a dynamic that is stuck, making movement or change difficult but it also suggests a process of something possibly becoming 'unstuck'. Our hypothesis is that through the process of ventilating, listening and thinking the toxicity of that 'sticky' dynamic can become somewhat detoxified making shifts and change possible. It is through the safety of the group that this becomes possible – the same group members committed to carving out regular time in a busy work week facilitated by a trained reflective supervisor.

Reflective supervision is not about meeting targets or about criticizing practice but is rather a holding space interested in what may be going on beneath the surface and how ourselves in our organisations are affected by the landscape in our sector, country and globally.

Reflective supervision is widely recognized as a core component of effective practice in the parent infant mental health space (Bain, Landman, Frost, Raphael-Leff & Baradon, 2019) and provides opportunities to reflect on cultural practice, power and privilege and how these impact on our work.

SAPPIN's offering of reflective supervision is in alignment with two of SAPPIN's core principles namely 'Quality programme implementation' and 'Cultural and contextual relevance' and SAPPIN 'walks the talk' in supporting organisations receive this thinking space.

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive with gratitude being the first response. Personal growth, support, improved emotional intelligence, and awareness of wellness have been cited as core areas of growth. Offering parenting support in a sector and country such as ours is invaluable but how to continue offering this support in a sustained, ethical way where those implementing the work are supported? Reflective spaces such as our supervision groups offers such a space – for thinking, reflection and support.



# COMBATING ABUSE AND IT'S RELENTING LONG-TERM IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Mahlatse Diale and Zaheera Seedat



Child abuse is an issue occurring all over the world. It can happen anywhere and child abusers come from all walks of life. Those who perpetuate abuse can be anyone including parents, close family members/friends, teachers, coaches and even someone online

The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes child abuse as a single or repeated act, or a lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there's an expectation of trust but the significant other mistreats them. This shows that typically, children can and often are abused by people that they trust. Yes, a stranger can abuse them too! But a lot of the time, children are being harmed by those they love or look up to.

Adults therefore have a huge responsibility towards children and protecting them. Children who are abused often tend to act out/rebel, engage in risky behaviours or withdraw and become compliant and learn no sense of assertive boundaries. These children then often grow up to become the abuser themselves or end up in relationships where they are abused - and the cycle continues. This is what has come to be known as inter-generational trauma. Unhealthy ways of dealing with our emotions - especially the negative ones - are passed down through generations leading to nervous systems that are hypervigilant and dysregulated. This all



impacts the body on being able to manage and regulate emotions which can cause significant mental health issues.

### **Risk factors**

Problems most commonly associated with the occurrence of child abuse and neglect are difficulties within homes such as domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, parental mental health issues, poverty and young people that are disconnected from their families. This leads to strained relationships and exposure to unhealthy ways of managing one's emotions. Children learn through observation and modelling and when unhealthy environments are teaching them unhealthy ways of coping, they are often learning to do the same.

### **JPCCC - Our goals**

At JPCCC, we recognise that parents often have the biggest impact. As a multidisciplinary team we work towards supporting parent-work so that parents can improve the way they parent their children. The aim is more than just preventing harm to the child, but to promote an understanding and new lens in which the parent can view their child. These goals help parents develop a better long-term relationship with their child with the hope of ensuring better mental health for the children as they grow into adulthood.

We advocate for children's rights to prevent abuse, are diligent in reporting abuse when it is occurring and try to ensure that it is stopped. Therapeutic interventions are offered for children as well as adults who need therapy in order to process and work through the impact of the abuse they have experienced. We are often confronted with parents who battle to communicate effectively with their children because they themselves did not experience parents who were responsive and attuned to their needs. They possibly had parents that didn't communicate but rather had to survive their own adverse life circumstances and did not have the capacity to develop these skills effectively.

It is evident though, that the demands of the world, especially the socio-economic environment causes much strain on families. During times of high stress, parents can become overwhelmed and it is easy for them to become reactive and fall back into the cycle of abuse in these moments. We see the impact that this has on children who are so aware of the strain in the household which causes them to act out in different ways in order to gain attention. Sometimes, even negative attention, is still attention and connection to the child. We try at JPCCC to help parents understand the communications underlying their child's behaviour.

Our therapeutic interventions hope to help them unpack their own cycles, unlearn unhealthy coping mechanisms and develop healthy ones. We try and help parents deal with their own traumas so that they are able to start thinking, building a reflective functioning and hold space for their children to parent them effectively. This will hopefully empower them to not repeat the abuse they have experienced on others especially their children; but to be able to develop healthy trusting relationships with others and be mentally healthy individuals. We have found that for most parents, their goal is to provide a safe home environment and to provide their children with the discipline they need in order to be successful and well-rounded members of society.

Parenting is difficult and is a journey for each parent. Being a parent triggers our own internal child and our own unmet needs which informs the way we react and respond to our children. Recognising this is so important for everyone who works with children. Each child forms part of a system and they are products of that system. Children and parents need love, support and care in order to help raise regulated, well-adjusted and resilient children. It does indeed take a village!

## **SEASONS GREETINGS**

### **A Message from the Director**



As we approach the end of another busy and meaningful year, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your commitment, passion, and the care you bring to the work we do together. Your dedication, the support of our extended network,

and the collaboration with partners across government and civil society have made real impact this year—and it has been a privilege to witness and be part of it.

As the festive season unfolds, I hope you find time to rest, reflect, and enjoy moments of peace with loved ones. May this season bring you joy and renewal, in whatever way you celebrate it. Let us also hold in our hearts those for whom this time of year is difficult, and let that awareness guides us as we step into a new year committed to creating safer, healthier, and more caring communities.

Wishing you a blessed festive season and a new year filled with hope, strength, and shared purpose.

— Wilmi

Please don't forget to support SAPPIN on social media

