

Press Release



**South African
Institute of
Race Relations**

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

For immediate release

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New report released on families and youth in South Africa

South African families are in crisis according to a new report released by the South African Institute of Race Relations this week. The report, entitled *The First Steps to Healing the South African Family*, documents the extent of family breakdown in South Africa and the effect this is having on children and the youth.

Some of the most alarming findings of the report include the following:

- Only a third of children are growing up living with both of their parents.
- Nearly a million children have lost both their parents, many to AIDS.
- There are 98 000 children living in child-headed households, 81% of whom have a living mother.
- Some 8% of children live in 'skip-generation' households with grandparents or great aunts and uncles.
- Nine million children (48%) are growing up with absent but living fathers.
- Youth unemployment stands at 51% and there are 3.3 million young people not in education, employment, or training.
- Some 50 000 school girls fell pregnant in 2007.
- Over a third of the country's prison population is under the age of 25.

The report, which draws on a range of sources, tracks the effects of unstable families on children and young people. It refers to international and local research which has found that children growing up without both parents are at a significant disadvantage when it comes to educational outcomes, employment prospects, behaviour, and future relationships.

Ms Lucy Holborn, family project manager at the Institute, said, 'Our research indicates that the lack of a stable family life for many children may be contributing to some of the social problems the country is facing. Problems such as youth unemployment, high rates of violent crime, teenage pregnancy, and alcohol and drug

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abuse may have their roots in children and young people growing up without positive parental role models.'

The research, which was sponsored by the Donaldson Trust, has been distributed to ministers, deputy-ministers, and directors-general in the departments of basic education, social development, and women, children, and people with disabilities. It has also been sent to MPs in the corresponding portfolio committees.

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