

Girl power high up on the CN Africa, Save the Children agenda

 By [Sindya Peters](#)

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Launched in August this year, Cartoon Network Africa's Powerpuff Girls (PPG) Awards is just about ready to draw to a close, with the winners to be announced at the end of October. The awards aims to celebrate and empower young African girls between the ages of nine and 14 by showcasing how they're using their superhero skills to bring about extraordinary changes to their respective worlds.



Gugu Ndebele, CEO of Save the Children SA

The three categories represent each of The Powerpuff Girls' characters, with projects submitted in the fields of technological innovation (The Buttercup Award), social responsibility and bravery (The Blossom Award); and lastly art and creativity (The Bubbles Award).

Save the Children South Africa, an NGO that aims to give children a healthy start in life, has partnered with the PPG Awards to inspire change that empowers and celebrates young African girls and their achievements. We chatted to Gugu Ndebele, CEO of Save the Children SA, to find out more about the organisation's work, what impact it hopes the PPG Awards will have for girls of Africa, and why it believes empowering the girl child is so very important for Africa.

 ***Share with us a bit about the work that Save the Children SA does.***

Gugu Ndebele: Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In South Africa and around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share. This includes fighting malnutrition, equipping guardians with positive parenting and positive discipline skills and focusing on early childhood development.

 ***What do some of Save the Children's long-term development programmes focus on, particularly in Africa?***

In 2015, the Save the Children movement (which includes Africa) agreed on a new global strategy called Ambition for

Children 2030. We also published a strategic plan for 2016-2018. Through this strategy, we will harness our resources, energy, knowledge and expertise to drive our three global breakthroughs for 2030. Those breakthroughs will be that no child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday, all children learn from a good quality basic education, and that violence against children is no longer tolerated.

■ ***Tell us more about the partnership between Save the Children and the Cartoon Network PPG Awards - what does the partnership entail?***

The PPG Awards partnership between Save the Children South Africa and Cartoon Network is important because through any of the interventions we do, our aim is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats its children. We believe that children have the knowledge, answers and rights to lead us by example, and we should do better as adults to engage them and celebrate their power. As the South African member of this global organisation, we are proud and honoured to partner with Cartoon Network on the PPG Awards as we cannot think of a better way to inspire change than to partner with an organisation that empowers and celebrates young girls and their achievements!



Image source: Cartoon Network

■ ***What impact do you hope for the initiative to have on young girls in Africa?***

We believe that the PPG Awards will empower young girls in Africa to show what they're truly made of. This recognition will not only encourage them to continue with the great work they are doing, but will also inspire their peers to also take positive actions to tackle challenges that are currently facing the world. This will be a great contribution in our bid to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

■ **Why is empowering the girl child so important for Africa?**

Girls in Africa face several challenges, for example, in a report that we published earlier this year called *The Many of Faces of Exclusion* it is estimated that by 2030 over 150 million more girls globally will marry before their 18th birthday and in Sub-Saharan Africa, due to population growth, the number of child brides will rise unless the rate of decline more than doubles. The global number of teen pregnancies is also set to increase. Projections indicate the number of girls under the age of 18 giving birth each year will increase globally from about 7.8 million today to 8.8 million by 2030. As a continent, Africa will have one of the greatest proportional increases of teen pregnancies over the next decade.

■ **Innovative, socially responsible, brave, creative - do you think these words aptly describe young girls in Africa today?**

Africa has about 54 countries, so it differs from country to country. In countries where girls are allowed to be themselves, to attend school etc., yes, those words are a perfect description. For example, Save the Children's very own ambassador Stacey Fru, who is also the social helper mentor for the Social Responsibility and Bravery award (The Blossom Award), is only 11 years old and has already written three books and is said to be Africa's youngest published author. However, even in those countries where girls are suppressed, there are those who are brave enough to challenge the patriarchal system and show their own individual superpowers!

The winners in each of the three categories will receive \$1,500 each to help bring their award-winning entry to life with the help of a dedicated mentor.

For more info on Save the Children Africa, go to www.savethechildren.org.za. for more on the Powerpuff Girls Awards, [click here](#).

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