



Commissioner  
for **Children**

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## Child Participation in Law Reform:

Child Government Monitors and the Western  
Cape Commissioner for Children's Reflections  
on experiences during oral hearings for the  
Children's Amendment Bill

14 May 2021



## Lukhanyo

History is no mystery  
A day good  
What my throat, bottling the thousands of voices  
Finally exited and my soul free.  
Still captured which statement capture  
The MPs gave a Friday evening  
No one really does.

I was filled  
By pouring out what was given to me  
Monitors of govt children of high I speak  
Delivered like a heart beats

I have never encountered such a day  
Parliament like no other  
History much joyous  
Children's Amendment Bill

Mended my worries n pain.  
Children and youth  
Paving the way

Parliament is my house now  
Coz I was made to feel right home  
Greetings to the house at large  
My name is of a child

Sitting in parliament With an adult crowd  
Was finally being heard n listened to from the child's mouth

Greetings to the house at large My name kid a child  
History is no mystery  
We did it  
N it was a blast

Parliament is house come have a cup of tea and talk about us





**Jaylin:** Personally I was so nervous going into parliament and I was so scared but it was amazing how everyone treated us nobody was belittled everyone was given a platform to be free and express themselves as they would like, it was so heartfelt and everyone connected so well with each other it was one of the best experiences that I had in my life and I would do it over and over and over again

I think as a little girl I never dreamed that one day i'll see myself being in parliament and speaking to so many MPs about something that's so special and so close to me and i am grateful for the opportunities that were offered and even those that are being offered for people it was just so amazing i met some of the most amazing people there and i can definitely say that is not just a place where we would go to learn ,I met so many mentors and friends.

And I would just like to say thank you to everyone that was present, thank you to everyone that was listening you know as a young girl it means so much to me to be able to inspire others and to be able to have a room full of people listening to what I have to say and I hope that one day I can offer that opportunity to someone else as well ❤️

And the chocolate muffins were definitely the best toooo ❤️



### Ruan:

I was literally very happy to communicate with my team mates and to be at Parliament. 😊 The food in the brown boxes was very tasty but unfortunately I did not have coffee because I was too shy to ask the other monitors to get me some, but it was good. 😊 I feel very happy to have taken photos with the members of parliament and to talk with them and now I can tell my friends that I spoke with the Chair. 😊

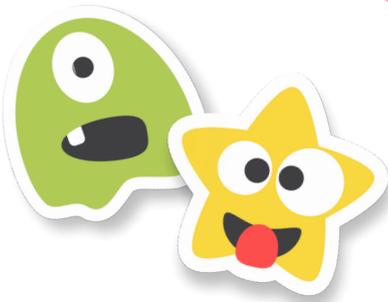
The monitors were cool and very kind to me. The food served after the session was very good and I wanted more that's why I was so angry Ms NOMDO. I hope the members of parliament heard my plea about the signal where we live and I hope they donate signal access to us because I have asked them nicely to do this. 😊 I hope and pray that this happens. When I arrived in Cape Town Christina welcomed me with open arms and took me to eat at Wimpy and visit the aquarium

It was very good thank you 🙏 I hope there will be another opportunity like this for us monitors to meet. Thank you Tessa for taking me to the planetarium I liked it because it was my first visit. But

I did not understand the museum (art gallery) at all as I don't understand the purpose of burnt sandpaper, but Cape Town was tops. Thanks everyone for treating me so well, I really want to meet you again. I wanted to say that Vee and Jay sing very well and thanks

Saadique for the chats. Thanks all. We care 🌍 😊 👍





**Alessio:** My experience at Parliament was nothing short of amazing!!! I had a blast with the government monitors when we had our mini photo shoot before the session. 😄 When the session began I liked the fact that the MP'S along with the Chair showed interest and listened attentively to all the government monitors. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and did not forget that the main purpose was to speak up for the more than 19.7 Million children in my country. It was an absolutely blessed experience.



**Vimbai:** My experience at the parliament was marvelous, Wonderful and exciting. I enjoyed myself with my group members and members from other organizations. In the beginning I was annoyed by why the MPs took time to start but then again it was an advantage because we had time to take pictures 😂 The food we got at the beginning was good enough for me and the coffee was extremely marvelous...During the session I was glad that we were actually allowed to be in and out of the Chambers because us as children have a tiny problem of loving the bathroom. At the end we given nice food parcels 😊 and we were given yet another chance to take pictures also with the Chairperson.. Overall my experience was marvelous I cant wait to go back again 100 I'm sure the MPs did listen because if they could Remember our famous Spokes lady @Jay then they remember the whole submission and what I said



**Saadiq:** It was a great experience being with adults and child monitors. Experiencing different views what children think of parents was amazing. Listening to other people's personal stories was so touching and inspirational. It was great to hear that adults wants to make SA a better place for children. Loved the interaction of different organizations. I would definitely accept such an opportunity when it comes my way. Last but not least, the food was delicious. I would not be able to do this without my Honourable Monitors. Thank you for the opportunity Christina.



**Ms S.:**

I really enjoyed my first time at the Parliament. It was fun and I liked the way the leaders were listening to us and also communicating back with us. My team mates were amazing, we worked well together. I really learnt a lot from there. I would like to thank you all for the opportunity I had. I would really love to go again.



**Ambrose:** My experience in presenting to parliament was one of the best experiences of my life in a nutshell. But to be more specific, the warmth, openness and receptiveness that the members of parliament had towards our submissions was amazing and something together we can all admire, seeing that they are adults and parents as well. My personal relief was that my anxiety was reduced due to the almost unfounded hostility that there was in the chambers and that allowed me to even share about my experiences I had while living in a pandemic.

I have one recommendation though, that Parliament provide toilets for disabled beings, as helping you push a fellow child government monitor into a toilet accommodated for disabled beings was difficult. Inclusivity is the only suggestion for me.





### Christina

I was so overjoyed about the Parliament session on Friday. There are many reasons why it made me happy. It was good for the portfolio committee chair to take our petition for a special session seriously and respond positively schedule it. The committee secretary went above and beyond the call of duty by contacting key child rights activists who had requested the special session. We conducted many preparatory meetings to ensure that we understood the model of child and youth participation the same way. She even took the initiative to bring on board other parties in parliament such as the public education office. The secretary played the role of a bridge between the child rights activists (young and older) with her committee chair to make sure everyone's needs would be met in the session.

Children's Institute was a key ally to encourage parliament to improve the substantive involvement of children and youth in Parliament processes. This discussion started with the public education office. We saw the children's amendment bill process as a key opportunity to model substantive participation.

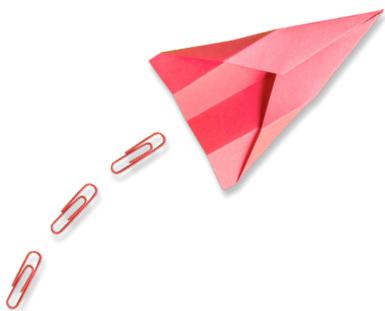
CI's role in bringing together children and youth from all participating organisation and supporting them to get ready on zoom and in person was invaluable. It helped to ease the nerves of first-time parliament presenters and build bonds of solidarity between children and youth.

The child and youth activists' commitment to the process of being involved in law reform was amazing. Many participated from the point of informing / writing the written submission for their organisation/ constituency. They worked hard over many weeks to learn about the law and make contributions from their lived realities. Those child and youth were volunteered or were selected to represent their peers and organisations made us all proud with their dedication to the process and their excellence in putting their case forward.

On the day of the parliament oral hearings excitement was running high. Some of us came a bit late which caused some difficulties with gaining access. Everyone wanted to take selfies before the time while the light was good. Those who came earlier could take all the selfies they wanted to. They even made the house their own with MPs watching them with amusement and indulgence. The children even roped the MPs into these selfie sessions. When all pictures official and personal were done, children reluctantly handed over their phones in accordance with the consensus reached on use of mobiles during the session.



When it came to presentation time our group was up first and we had to know our stuff because we had 10 physical presenters (and some more on audio) to be completed in 30 minutes because we were warned that the chair was a stickler for time. We executed perfectly 100 We had two presenters using Afrikaans and isiXhosa. I think, it was unfair of the chair to add the translation time into our slot as I had assumed simultaneous translations. We handled the questions of clarity with ease and confidence. I am super proud of our group.





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**Christina:** The biggest recommendation I have is about the feeding of child guests. The food provided at the start of the marathon session was not enough to sustain the children. They should have been given one of their food parcels at the start and the other at the end as we were going to have a continuous session. A continuous session of the duration we had was also not considerate of child participants. I also did not appreciate the separate seating of children and adults for dinner as I feel it undermined the spirit of solidarity established in the session.



**Tessa:** Attending the first closed session for children and youth at Parliament was a great experience. I am exceptionally proud of the way in which our monitors presented and answered questions from the committee. Our group was so well-prepared, and it showed. I feel honoured to have listened to the stories of the brave youth who chose to share their stories so that other children may have a chance of a better life. I loved that the MPs were open to listening to the young people, acknowledged their experiences, and asked questions to clarify their understandings. I am especially glad that they voiced the fact that we, society, must do more for the children in our country ❤️ The Good Hope Chambers was a safe space filled with empathic people who are fighting for a better country for all children. Well-done to the change-makers!

