

PRESS RELEASE

Let children enjoy better childhoods: Christina Nomdo, newly appointed Western Cape Commissioner Children

Veteran child rights advocate Christina Nomdo is ready to serve the Western Cape's children, following the provincial government naming her as its first ever Commissioner for Children.

Nomdo's new role, as enacted by law, is to "monitor, investigate, research, and educate the public about, lobby for and advise on, matters pertaining to children in the Western Cape".

"I will work with the departments of Education, Social Development, Health, Cultural Affairs and Sports to advance children's rights. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these social sector players are critical for ensuring child well-being," says Nomdo.

"In the longer term, these departments are ideal for building the framework for the prevention of violence against children.

"The rate of child murder and child rape in the Western Cape province will only decrease when society takes responsibility for the character of childhoods. We must change the experiences children have in childhood from being bombarded by violence in their homes, schools and communities."

Nomdo adds: "Children must be able to play freely. They must be able to attain optimal health and be educated to reach their full potential. When children falter, they must be cushioned with sufficient safety nets to make them whole again.

"My vision is for children to enjoy better childhoods and realise the full extent of their rights."

Nomdo draws on three decades of experience in the children's sector, having started at a grassroots level in Belhar where she was raised.

"There I was given the opportunity to develop models of practice. First, in children's librarianship as a local government civil servant then in youth development with a non-profit initiative focused on the training of health professionals," says Nomdo.

"I was formally introduced to child rights theory and practice at the Children's Budget Unit at Idasa (Institute for Democracy in Southern Africa). I then invested eight years in leading RAPCAN (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) as its director."

RAPCAN became known for its innovative practice models to prevent violence against children.

"During my tenure, the advocacy of children's rights reached new levels and led to advancements of children's autonomy and participation rights," says Nomdo.

"The spectrum of outputs ranged from a successful Constitutional Court challenge to clarify children's dignity and privacy rights; to the production of music videos with children raising their voices against violence. The South African landscape of children's rights was changed forever."

The Leadership Innovation Network for Collaboration in the Children's sector then nominated her to the National Planning Commission, where she still serves.

"Here I led an initiative, a global first, for children to be actively involved in the review of the National Development Plan. This project built on the 'Children Participating in Governance' initiative; piloted 15 years earlier," says Nomdo.

“The last four years at the National Planning Commission has enhanced my understanding of how government works as well as the value of being able to draw children into the governance arena.

“I am uniquely capable of connecting with children authentically. Insights from their lived realities are translated into development practice models and policy instruments.”

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