



**Commissioner
for Children**
OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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CHILDREN COMMISSIONER'S CHRONICLES

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Three Western Cape child human rights defenders address the UNCRC in Geneva

In September, three child human rights defenders from the Western Cape had the opportunity to address the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and advocate for the rights of children in the province and country.

Rushaan Abdol (15), Solakha Noyi (16), and Ruan Klaase (16) are Child Government Monitors and Advisors in the Western Cape Commissioner for Children's office. They are advocates for child rights realisation. Their advocacy is a testament to their dedication and commitment to improving the lives of children. The children's meeting at the UNCRC is a platform for children to amplify their voices and call for action from government on issues affecting children. The trio lobbied for concerns to inform recommendations to the State by the

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is a body of child rights experts established by the United Nations. It monitors the progress of States in fulfilling their obligations to children's rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The three equally excited children demonstrated exceptional ability and determination in defending children's rights, making them ideal representatives for the children of our province at an international level.

Commissioner Christina Nomdo said the three eloquent Child Government Monitors presented their lived realities of children in South Africa, to the UNCRC. She said their poignant stories highlighted their advocacy issues in relation to mental health services for children, child hunger, violence against



Rushaan Abdol (15), Ruan Klaase (16) and Solakha Noyi (16) are Child Government Monitors and Advisors in the WCCC office.

children, discrimination, children as agents of change in their society calling for the voting age to decrease to 16 and for the establishment of a National Children's Commissioner.

Their posters and presentations contained recommendations to government for change. "The Commissioner and staff, child government monitors, mentors and alumni are incredibly proud and grateful to them for representing the Western Cape Commissioner for Children exceptionally well," she said.

Solakha described this as an amazing opportunity to raise the voices of South African children on an international level. Rushaan stated that her involvement in the Office increased her sense of responsibility to improve the conditions of children in any way she can. Ruan expressed his

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gratitude for being chosen by the Commissioner to represent the Matzikama Municipality group and emphasised the significance of his participation in speaking with the UNCRC, AU, and National Parliament, which he said wouldn't have been possible without the Commissioner's support.





MESSAGE FROM THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER CHRISTINA NOMDO

We are proud to share our second bi-annual newsletter, which was launched in 2023.

We present key actions and achievements the office in which the office has been involved. It is a tribute to the staff who work tirelessly, the children who are simultaneously our partners and most precious partners as well as the many stakeholders we engage to promote the realisation of children's rights.

The second half of this year was packed with significant moments that the office celebrates. A particular highlight was

enabling 3 children from rural communities to speak directly with the United Nations Committee on the Right of the Child in Geneva, Switzerland. The Children's Commissioner Chronicles will help us raise awareness of the office mandate. For the first time the newsletter will now be available in the three provincial official languages; English, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa. We are very also grateful that there are more staff to give effect to the Commissioner's duties.

We hope you enjoy traveling with us on our journey of building this institution.

Regards



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Educate

Educate everyone on the laws, policies, and projects for children.

Advise

Advise governments on improvements to realise child rights

The Children's Commissioner has been given superpowers to do her job to protect children.

Recommend

Recommend a course of action to change law, policy, and practices that negatively affect children

Lobby

Lobby key decision makers on laws, policies, and practices that affect children

Child Participation

Children should know about and be involved in the work of the Commissioner for Children of their perspectives of their rights, needs and interests.

Investigate

Investigate complaints about government services and make recommendations

Monitor

Monitor the impact of government services, laws, and policies on children

Research

Conduct or initiate research on policy or practices that affect children.





WCCC implements government budget monitoring workshop with Bitou Junior Council in Plettenberg Bay



During the government budget camp in July which was held in Malmesbury, five children from the municipality raised service delivery issues that infringed on children's rights.

These issues included the lack of waste/refuse removal and the presence of unsafe parks in the Bitou Municipality.

In response to this, the WCCC team travelled to Plettenberg Bay for a government budget training session with the first-ever Bitou Municipality Junior Town Council in November.

The primary goal of the training was to provide children with knowledge about government budgets, which is essential for advocating for child rights within budgetary processes.

The WCCC's mandate ensures child participation, guaranteeing that children have a voice in decisions that affect them, such as government budgeting for the realisation of child rights.

The two-day workshop aimed to empower children to understand their rights, budget monitoring, and more through this partnership. Children learned about the municipal budget, how it is determined, and how they can lobby for a bigger budget as a structure.

The first day of the workshop focused on children as rights defenders. The children created posters that was submitted to the United Nations Special Rapporteur. The workshop also covered leadership role models, with the children drawing lessons from Springboks Captain Siya Kolisi's life and leadership style. On the second day, the workshop

covered the branches of government and the division of revenue. The Bitou Council Speaker, Claude Terblanche, and his office's advocacy for child participation in governance have greatly impressed the Commissioner.

During the workshop the children had the opportunity to engage the Municipal Manager and lobby to allocate resources to safer and better parks and refuse removal. These issues are also the main basic service delivery concerns of other child government monitors around the province.

At the workshop Bitou Municipal Manager, Mbulelo Memani, gave a presentation on the Municipality's budgeting processes.

The Junior Council had the opportunity to ask questions to Mr. Memani and learned that they could influence the Municipality's budget by participating in the public participation period in their respective communities.

The Speaker emphasised the importance of including children in planning for them to develop into productive and prosperous citizens.

Speaker Terblanche said: "It's important to ensure that we include children in what we plan for them so that there is a conducive environment for them to grow into the productive and prosperous citizens they should become."

Commissioner Nomdo said: "Children have a valuable contribution to make to governance. They provide a unique perspective on lived realities. If only we provide more accessible governance information, many more would be active citizens".



We are thrilled to announce that we have added two new staff members to the WCCC family.

The two Assistant Directors are joining our Monitoring and Awareness branch as contract workers for the next two years.

Malcolm Hess will be focusing on monitoring while **Xolane Ndlovu** will be focused on advocacy. Tessa Goldschmidt was promoted to the Assistant Director position.



Malcolm Hess has a strong background in community engagement and research as a Social Crime Prevention Project Manager, an Educator, a Program Manager capacitating communities in the urban and semi-urban setting. He holds a Masters in Develop-

ment Studies with an emphasis on social protection, development management, social policy and economics in development.



Xolane Ndlovu holds a Masters degree in Political Science. Xolane has a strong background in research, diplomatic missions, advocacy, and human rights. His work over the years has involved supporting policy research, monitoring and reporting on socio-economic initiatives and man-

aging community outreach programs. "I am honoured to have been appointed as the ASD of the WCCC. I am looking forward to contributing to the promotion and protection of the rights of the children in our communities," Xolane said.



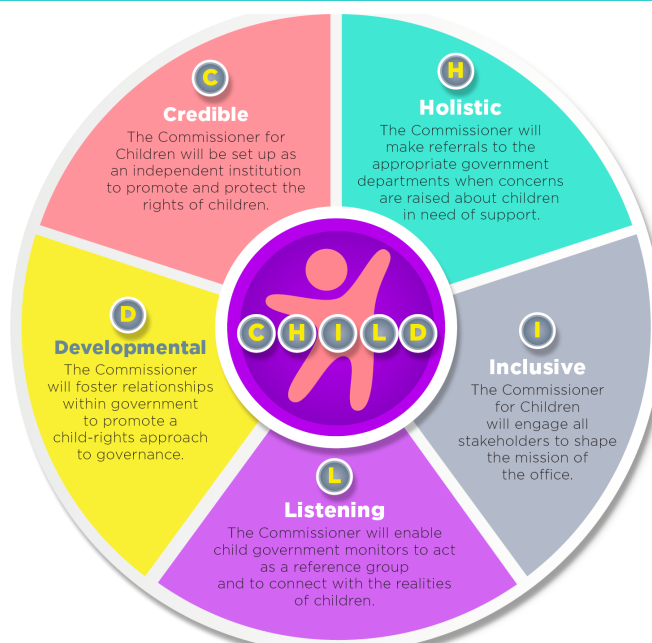
Tessa Goldschmidt has been promoted to Assistant Director of Investigations and Advice branch. She previously held the position of Children's Commissioner Officer (CCO) in the Awareness and Monitoring branch, where she was responsible for child participation in the Office. Tessa was the first CCO and staff member of the Office after she was recruited in February 2021. She has been instrumental in con-

tributing to the development of the four child participation models in the Office and has developed a strong relationship with the Office's Child Government Monitors.

"I am so honoured to be chosen for this position. I'm excited to take on this new role and to grow in my career", she said.

Learning Brief: Building the Capacity of children for public budget advocacy.

2022. This brief provides an overview of the capacity building process and detail the children's inputs into budget programme analysis, the Municipal/provincial Economic Review and Outlook, as well as the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement 2022.



Community Child Rights Workshop: Beaufort West Municipality. The WCCC visited the Beaufort West Municipality from 7-12 March 2022 and engaged with adult service providers and children at service sites and in schools. This report presents the key insights gleaned from these engagements.



The Child Government Monitor (CGM) forum is one of the four child participation models in the office of the Western Cape Commissioner for Children's office.

The CGM forum was established in 2020 to ensure that children are involved in the work of the WCCC.

This forum provides the children with opportunities to influence laws, policies and practices

for children in addition to being educational and empowering. The children are nominated by a child rights organisation or any other organisation working with children including Child and Youth Care Center or nominate themselves.

In this feature, **Keeping Up with the CGMs**, we will introduce you to the faces behind the CGM forum and learn more about their work as child rights defenders in the province.



Liliitha Kopolo, 15-year-old Grade 9 student at Bellville Technical High School, describes herself as funny, weird, and kind. Her favourite colour is blue, which she finds calming and relaxing. She enjoys natural science and math, and she also likes to draw.

When did you join the WCCC and what inspired you to join the CGM Forum?

I joined the WCCC in June 2021 at the age of 12 when the Commissioner came to my school for child protection week. At first I did not know what I was doing when I wrote down my parents contact details to join the CGM forum but when I joined the sessions on WhatsApp and how everyone spoke about their daily lives and child's rights.

What do you enjoy most about being a CGM/Mentor/Advisor?

Besides going to camps, which are really educational and fun, I enjoy interacting with everyone on the groups, it's the way everyone interacts with each other it's like we have known each other for a long time and that just shows how welcoming the atmosphere is.

What has been your significant moment as the CGM?

When I went to Johannesburg with another CGM for a GBV summit which was the first that children were part of. I was happy that I could be a part of that. Also another reason why it was such a special moment was because it was my first time on a plane and my first time going to another province besides Eastern Cape. My other significant moment as a CGM was when I went to Botswana for the Regional Child Rights Conference 2023 for CRNSA (Child Rights Network For Southern Africa). It was my first time flying out of the country.

What do you think are the challenges facing young people /children in the Western Cape province?

Mental health is one of the many problems that us young people or children face. This happens across the world but personally I would think the pressure of the teachers at school. The way that teachers pressure us at school about exams and making us feel overwhelmed, constantly reminding us that they could be anywhere in the world but they chose to stay and teach us. Discrimination and bullying in schools are also sum of the problems we face.

How would you change the world if you could?

I would make it a safe environment for children to be able to play freely in parks, on the roads and at school without feeling scared of being kidnapped, bullied or getting hurt. If I were to change the world I would make every child happy.

What is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to you?

Joining the CGM Forum because I am slowly but surely learning more about myself everyday, my vocabulary enhances everyday and everyone learns from each other.



Zubair Rykklief is an 18-year-old Grade 12 student at Belhar Excelior Secondary School. He describes himself as shy, passionate, and loving. His favorite colour is sky blue. His favorite subjects are English and Life Orientation. He loves English because it allows him to understand people and write his own stories about the way he sees the world. Life Orientation gives him a basic understanding of knowledge that he feels everyone should have.

When did you join the WCCC and what inspired you to join the CGM forum?

I joined the WCCC in July of 2020 and what drew me towards joining was the fact that I felt like the message and goal of the office was something worth fighting for and I could not miss out on making a change for my generation and the generation to come after us.

What do you enjoy most about being a CGM/Mentor/Advisor?

I enjoy learning about all the rights we as children and youth have in our country and the constant need to be activists because we have the chance to speak up for those who cannot or don't want to out of fear and bring real change even if it takes us lots of time to achieve.

What has been your significant moment as a CGM?

The moment we were contacted by members of Parliament from our country and Commissioner's from other countries because they love the work that we have been doing.

What do you think are the challenges facing children/young people in the province?

The biggest challenge I think youth in the Western Cape are facing right now is the fact that they don't know that they have certain rights and people older than them are using it to their advantage. This includes in schools, homes, outdoors, etc.

If you could, How would you change the world to be a better place for children?

If I could do something to change the world I would really love to end world hunger and make sure that all the people in the world never experience starvation again.

What is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to you?

Meeting Christina because she allowed me to be a better person and meet others who wanted to make a difference in our country.





Travel ambassadors share their travel experiences to Geneva, Switzerland

Three human child rights defenders, Solakha Noyi, Ruan Klaase and Rushaan Abdol traveled to Geneva, Switzerland in September, to present to the UNCRC about the lived realities of

children in the province and the country. The trio detail their travel experiences, from when the visa application process began, their week long stay in Geneva until their returned home.



We met alot of cool and a m a z i n g peeps. We met André and Christine who work for UNICEF. They invited us for lunch, Christine is fluent in a French and gave us a few quick lessons. André took us on an amazing trip to Montreux where we had a nice picnic by the lake. By the way I think I lost weight walking on that day YHO, but as André said we weren't lost, we didn't get off at the wrong stop.

We also met Anne who is the chair for the Committee. She took us out for ice cream and suggested an awesome pizza place. We also got to meet Karabo who is very phenomenal and smart. She brought us each chocolates and can speak incredibly fast.

The meeting was absolutely amazing I had so much fun and the best thing was that we had a room where we could chill and trust me the chocolates Karabo gave us saved us. The Committee members were so nice and were attentively listening to everything we had to say.

We went to CERN which was ABSOLUTELY MIND BLOWING!!!! I was standing in front of an actual accelerator and learned so much. It was so sweet of everyone to stay even if it wasn't as interesting to them.

I even got myself a CERN hoodiewe also went to the castle of Chillon which was another huge highlight OH MY WORD!! I felt like royalty like literally. We also got to meet the Egyptian kids and had so much fun. By the way, their McDonald has more than just Oreo Mcflurys. Being on a train and seeing the beautiful scenery was absolutely breathtaking.

André bought us some gifts and I'm still trying to finish building the castle puzzle. Overall, it was an amazing experience and WOW! I'm still trying to adjust back to reality because Switzerland felt like a dream.

We had to send a two-minute voice note as an application for the Commissioner to fly to Geneva and it was very stressful for me because I wasn't sure if I was going to be selected. The Commissioner had to send a submission to the Government and it was very stressful because it took a long time for them to sign it but luckily for the Commissioner she stayed on their heels to sign the submission and finally they signed for all three of us.

Luckily I was selected and my parents and I had to go to Cape Town for a visa application process. We had to fill in a lot of papers and forms. My parents were not always available.

Going to the visa offices was very stressful because we did not know at all whether all the papers had been successfully signed. The accommodation was excellent in Cape Town although at some hotels there was no lunch.

We flew from Cape Town to Dubai which was very long. We had to sit in hot Dubai for hours before our next flight which was very frustrating. When we flew to Geneva, they told us about turbulences and I was very on my nerves, lucky for me we didn't feel it at all.

Check In was unfair because the first class and Business class people got an advantage. Their flights were good and the food they served was excellent. Flying to Geneva was very fun and also stressful.

We did a lot of sight seeing and got to experience Geneva to the fullest The modes of transport that we took during the week was: walking, boat, tram, bus, train and plane.

When we arrived the Sunday we went to Burger King just to feel a bit closer to home and then we were chilled at the hotel.

The Monday we went to the official UN building (Palais De Nations) and then travelled to the De Wilsons just to familiarise ourselves. We worked on our speeches on Monday. We took a boat over Lake Geneva and went to a fine dining restaurant in "like a city centre square" vibe.

The Tuesday was UN day and we went out to restaurants afterwards. On Wednesday we went to the Universe Of Particles in Cern. Solakha loved this! It was very informative. It was also really close to the border of France and we wanted to go but Tina didn't want. We then went to a

restaurant where we ate Fondue with Christine, Eric, Andre, Prof Ann and another Committee member for the evening.

Ruan didn't want to even try the Fondue but ended up loving it and complained every time someone ate. It was so stunning there and I got chills inside the castle cause of the history that took place there. We then traveled back by train again the afternoon, went to the hotel for a bit and then went out to a traditional Swiss restaurant.

We loved it so much They played traditional Swiss music and we ate chocolate fondue. They sang happy birthday to me and even gave me a ice cream meringue that I shared with the rest .

On Thursday we went out with Andre to a city an hour away by train, called Montreux. We did kind of get lost but eventually found our way around the city. Andre said "You never get lost, your trip just gets extended" .



CGMs make a submission to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on the lived realities of children in the province and country

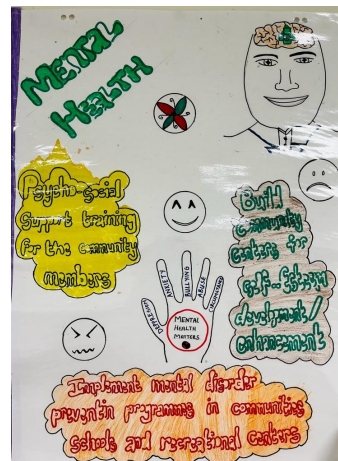
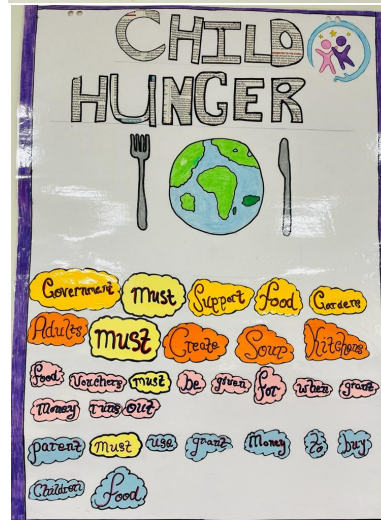
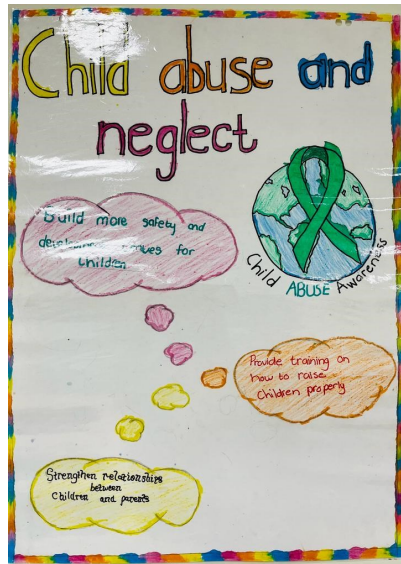
The Child Government Monitors (CGMs) have submitted a report highlighting their concerns regarding children's rights to the United Nations Child Rights.

The CGMs developed a submission in relation to the List of Issues Prior to Reporting in 2020. This submission is a follow-up after South Africa's State Report was tabled.

The CGMs have consistently advocated for various issues that they believe deserve special attention in the State Report. These issues include mental health, child hunger, violence, discrimination, child participation in government budgets, the establishment of a national children's commissioner, and the reduction of the voting age to 16 years.

Their recommendations to the South African government include providing psycho-social support training for community members, building community centers for self-esteem development and enhancement, and implementing mental disorder prevention programmes in communities, schools, and recreational centres. By prioritising mental health, the government can ensure the well-being of children and provide them with the necessary support.

Regarding child hunger, the children recommend that the government support food gardens, encourage adults to create soup kitchens, and provide food vouchers for when grant money runs out. It is essential to address child hunger to ensure that children have access to nutritious meals and do not suffer from malnutrition.



Violence in the home is a significant issue that the CGMs want the South African government to address. They suggest building more safety and development centers for children, providing training on how to raise children properly, and strengthening relationships between children and parents.

By creating a safe and supportive environment, the government can protect children from violence and provide them with the necessary resources to thrive. The CGMs also advocate for policies that protect children from discrimination, particularly against the LGBTQI+ community. They believe that all children should be treated equally and that discrimination should not be tolerated.

By implementation of these policies that promote inclusivity and acceptance, the government can create a society that respects the rights and dignity of all children. In conclusion, the CGMs have submitted a report highlighting their concerns regarding the State Report's lack of child-friendliness. They have advocated for various issues, including mental health, child hunger, violence, discrimination, budget, the establishment of a national children's commissioner, and the reduction of the voting age.

Similarly, by addressing these issues, the South African government can create a better future for its children, ensuring their well-being, safety, and equal opportunities.





The Commissioner and three Child Advisors in the Office attended a public libraries seminar entitled 'Changing lanes'. The children were most impressed by the call to public librarians to become community activists for human rights.

The delegation was privileged to hand over a set of our publications to the MEC Cultural Affairs and Sport as well as meet and hand over an isiXhosa version of our mandate poster to Dr Guzula. Dr. Guzula translated the mandate story from the English original, free of charge, during COVID-19 pandemic.



Our CGMs Vimbai Watambwa and Saadiq Daniels presented travel experiences of children **who make change in the world**. The presentation was made at the Africa Aviation Innovation Summit. They presented on Child Government Monitors travel experiences and impact at the United Nations. Challenging airlines to take children and their travel experiences seriously.



The Commissioner had an amazing time hanging out with the learners at Rosewood Primary School in Bonteheuwel.

She talked about the important work of the Commissioner for Children and children's rights.

The children were so engaged and excited to learn, and they even won some cool prizes!



The Commissioner visited the Strandfontein Secondary school to conduct Representative Council of Learners consultations. The focus of these consultations is on whether the voices of RCL are being heard and the quality of the relationship between the RCL and the school management.



The Commissioner attended a Thanksgiving church service at the New Apostolic Church in Ottery. She was invited by the church to witness the empowerment of children and young people in faith communities

