



**Commissioner  
for Children**

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29 MAY 2023

**Western Cape Commissioner for Children hosts a stakeholder consultation to unpack resource constraints hindering Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the child protection sector from providing needed services.**

As the country observes the Child Protection Week between 29 May to 5 June 2023, to raise awareness of the rights of children, the office of the Western Cape Commissioner for Children has taken cognisance of the ongoing resource constraints and other challenges that had befallen the child protection sector.

These constraints had brought the sector to its knees and had severely affected the services which these organisations provide to vulnerable children in the province.

About 117 NGOs rendering statutory child protection services are funded by the provincial Department of Social Development, for R200 million.

The Department also funds 140 NGOs rendering preventative and early intervention services at a cost of R106 million, reaching 18 000 families and 60 000 children.

In the province, 42 388 children are currently in alternative care while those in foster care stand at 39 550.

In a recent stakeholder consultation with the sector, the NGOs told the Commissioner for Children, Christina Nomdo, that they are at breaking point due to financial constraints.

The challenges identified by the organisations include the high turnover rate of Social Service Professionals (SSPs) which has given rise to challenges with filling

vacant posts. This, they say, consequently causes delays in effective service delivery, casework backlogs, and clients having to constantly adapt to new SSPs.

The organisations flagged the low remuneration levels, the lure of higher salaries in government, high caseloads, vicarious trauma, and stressors due the nature of child care and protection work; as the main reasons for the rate of resignations by SSPs.

The sector has also seen an increased demand for their services caused by an array of social ills. With the diminishing funding, from the government and private donors, the sector is struggling to keep up with this demand.

Nomdo says: "Some of the NGOs services had shut down, leaving a cemetery of dead designated child protection offices while many other services and offices throughout the province are in the ICU."

"The government knows it is not giving enough support to these organisations that in effect, deliver on the government's constitutional mandate," Nomdo says.

The Office of the Commissioner for Children has now started to build a bridge between the NGOs and the government to facilitate a dialogue on how they can better work together to rescue the child protection systems.

Commissioner Nomdo has invited both parties to invest in strategic engagements with each other to alleviate the crisis.

She says: "These engagements aim to achieve viable funding models and resuscitation of services for the most vulnerable of children in the province who are in need of care and protection."

"We need to do more to support families. That is why I am a fervent advocate for prevention and early intervention services that build family resilience. And when families are unable or unwilling to take care of their children, then the government must step in," she says.

Ends.

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## About the Western Cape Commissioner for Children:

The Western Cape Commissioner for Children is an independent governance institution in the Western Cape. The Commissioner is mandated to protect and promote the rights, needs and interests of children in the province by working with the departments of Education, Health, Social Development as well as Cultural Affairs and Sport. The Commissioner for Children reports to Provincial Parliament on activities, functions and progress on objectives.

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