

Tuesday, 2 September 2025]

No 88 - 2025] SECOND SESSION, SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

TUESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2025

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker:

- 2025 LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, USA 4–6 AUGUST 2025**

DELEGATION:

Speaker: Daylin Mitchell

Deputy Speaker: Reagen Allen

Chief Whip: Gillion Bosman

Chief Whip of the Official Opposition: Ayanda Bans

International Relations and Protocol Officer: Achmat Patience

1. INTRODUCTION

The Western Cape Provincial Parliament has been a regular participant in the annual legislative summits of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). These summits focus on developments in the mandates of United States legislatures and, in addition, consider how legislatures are dealing with various matters affecting the sector in a new and ever-changing world.

The sessions at the summit are presented with the intention of sharing best practices among the attendees. The summit is attended by legislators and legislative staff from the US state legislatures. As a result of the growing popularity of the summit in the international legislative sector, the summit provides policy sessions for international attendees. The summit also provides sessions specifically for legislative staff aimed at professionally developing legislative staff. This report provides a summarised record of the WCPP delegation's participation in the summit.

2. LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT

NCSL celebrated its 50th anniversary by welcoming 9,000 attendees to the annual Legislative Summit in Boston. International delegates that participate were from 28 jurisdictions. This year, the summit took on a new format and on day one, attendees were welcomed in the opening session on a discussion on political violence. On June 14, a gunman assassinated Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, and severely wounded Sen. John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette.

Gabby Gifford who served as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Arizona from 2007 to 2012, was shot in the head by a gunman who killed six people and wounded 12 others during an event with constituents in Tucson in 2011. Ms Gifford shared her experience after her ordeal while she is still in recovery since the incident. The session concluded with a sit-down discussion between Speaker of Wisconsin, Robin Vos, and Michale Smerconish from CNN.

Other sessions that were attended by the WCPP delegation is as follows:

2.1 IMPACT OF ROBOTICS AND AI

Key takeaways from this session:

- Robotics and AI are new industries
- Robotics, AI are reshaping education through adaptive platforms, and simulations.
- Emphasis on upskilling to meet the demands of AI-driven economy.
- AI-driven tools can improve productivity and collaboration.
- The discussions underscored the importance of transparent algorithms, and data privacy.

2.2 HOW TO WRITE ANYTHING BETTER

Key takeaways from this session:

- When writing, consider the cultural nuances.
- Tailor your tone, structure and vocabulary.
- Use plain and precise language and avoid jargon.
- Match your tone to the context.

2.3 THE IMPACT OF TARIFFS HOME AND ABOARD

Key takeaways from this session:

- Tariffs may shield domestic industries but can also raise costs for consumers.
- Individual states are increasingly shaping their own trade destinies.
- State-level MOU's and trade delegations are becoming vital.
- Trade agreements are increasingly costly.

2.4 AI- TRANSFORMING DAILY LIFE, GOVERNANCE, AND INNOVATION

Key takeaways from this session are follows:

- AI is rapidly integrating into everyday experiences.
- AI driven systems are being used during personal time.
- Companies are utilizing AI to optimize operations.
- Legislatures are urgently searching for regulatory framework.
- There are still concerns on data privacy, cybersecurity and the socioeconomic impact.

2.5 THE GREAT POLITICAL REALIGNMENT

Key takeaways:

- 2024 electorate revealed more racial and ethnically diverse coalition.
- Gains were notable among the Hispanic, Black, and Asian voters.
- Support strengthened for the current USA President among the non-college voters.
- Democrats face an uphill battle to reinvigorate their base.
- 2021 midterms may hinge on turnout of voters on the day.

2.6 MEETING WITH NCSL EXECUTIVE

The WCPP delegation had the opportunity to meet privately with the NCSL Executive and the takeaway from that meeting as follows:

- The WCPP will engage with the other provincial legislatures across South Africa to consider joining the NCSL as permanent member.
- The NCSL introduced the newly elected President, Vice President and other elected representatives to the WCPP delegation.
- The NCSL plans another outreach visit to South Africa and will inform the WCPP when this happens.

3. CLOSING

The summit ended with a sit-down one-on-one session with Leslie Odom Jr. He shared his life lessons from his acting career. There were several takeaways from this session:

- Leslie's father-in-law challenged him to ask, *What did you for yourself in the absence of a ringing phone.*
- Leslie's philosophy was based on *You either win or You learn.*
- Setbacks are not dead ends but data collection.
- Every audition, rejection, and quiet season became fuel for growth rather than discouragement.

4. OPPORTUNITIES TO CONSIDER FOR THE WCPP

- The NCSL has access to a wide range of resources that could be of great benefit to the Members and administration of the WCPP, particularly relating to policy development, the use of technology, etc.
- The conference provided a good opportunity for participants to gain exposure to a wide variety of aspects of the legislative environment and to interact with other legislators and staff members, not only from the US but from across the world.
- Many legislatures in the US are very active in drafting legislation relating to matters that affect the daily lives of citizens in the modern world, and this could serve as a source of inspiration and information for similar developments in our province and country.

2. **REPORT OF THE 54TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (AFRICA REGION) CONFERENCE 10-16 AUGUST 2025 BANJUL, THE GAMBIA**

ATTENDEES:

Reagen Allen, Deputy Speaker

Nomafrench Mbombo, Member of the Provincial Parliament

Achmat Patience, International Relations and Protocol Officer

1. Introduction

The Western Cape Provincial Parliament: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Branch was invited to participate in the 54th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Africa Region) Conference in Banjul, The Gambia from 10-16 August 2025. This conference consisted of the main conference and the meetings of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT). The convening of this conference was in accordance with article 16(3) of the CPA Africa Region constitution, which provides a platform for the executive committee and the secretariat to account for the activities of the association.

2. Report and resolutions

The South African Parliament, together with the provincial legislatures, participated in the proceedings of the 54th conference with the theme *Strengthening democratic governance and resilience in Africa: tackling conflicts, economic shocks and climate change*.

The 54th CPA (Africa Region) Conference afforded parliamentarians across the Africa Region the opportunity to deliberate on and process the governance work of the Executive. The conference also provided a platform for Members to share experiences on the following topics:

- The role of African Parliaments in fighting graft and promoting good governance;
- The role of African legislatures in boosting industrialisation through value addition and local manufacturing;
- Exploring innovative legislative and policy solutions to finance climate adaptation in Africa;
- Strengthening legislative efforts to full inclusion in society to empower persons with disabilities;
- The role of Africa parliaments in ensuring accessible and affordable healthcare in the context of universal health care; and
- Leveraging AI in parliamentary processes and legislative oversight.

Furthermore, the annual general meeting processed reports emanating from the Executive Committee and sub-committee meetings and presided over the filling of vacancies for the positions of Vice Chairperson, Treasurer, CWP Chairperson, CWP Vice Chairperson and subregional representatives.

3. Messages of solidarity

During the opening ceremony of the 54th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Africa Region) Conference, delegates received messages of solidarity from the Secretary General of the CPA International, the Speaker of the National Assembly of The Gambia and the Chairperson of the CPA Africa Region Executive Committee. The keynote address was delivered by the President of The Gambia.

In his remarks, the CPA International Secretary General appreciated the commitment of all branches in participating in the various programmes of the CPA.

His Excellency the President of the Gambia wished all delegates a fruitful conference and a memorable stay in Banjul.

4. Discussions and analysis from CWP business meeting

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Africa Region and the CPA Africa Region Executive Committee also held meetings prior to the opening of the Regional Conference. The latter of these was presided over by the Chairperson of the CPA Africa Region Executive Committee, Hon. Catherine Gotani Hara, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Malawi, who is also the current Vice-President of the CPA Africa Region as host of the 55th CPA Africa Regional Conference due to take place in Malawi in 2026.

During the plenary of the CWP, it was confirmed that the Africa Region will put forward the Speaker of the KZN Provincial Legislature as its candidate for the upcoming elections for the vacancy of the Chairperson of the CWP International.

5. Plenary workshops

Following the deliberations of the above-mentioned topics, the following resolutions were agreed to:

Recalling the ideals and principles of the African Union and the Commonwealth, which promote democracy, good governance, peace, and sustainable development;
Recognizing that conflicts, economic volatility, and climate risks threaten the stability, prosperity, and well-being of African citizens, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised;

Acknowledging the sacrifices of visionaries and activists whose struggles for self-determination laid the foundations for Africa's democratic heritage;

Reaffirming the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as guiding frameworks for an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful continent;

Recognizing the inherent dignity, and the equal and inalienable rights and freedoms of all persons, including persons with disabilities, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, and other relevant regional and international human rights instruments;

Noting that the Conference theme calls upon Parliaments to act as steadfast guardians of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity;

Determined to strengthen legislative, oversight, and representative functions to address corruption, promote industrialisation, advance climate adaptation, ensure social inclusion, expand healthcare access, and harness emerging technologies;

Convinced that stronger inter-parliamentary cooperation, public-private partnerships, and civil-society engagement are essential to achieving a resilient, equitable, and thriving Africa;

The delegates further agreed:

On Fighting Graft and Promoting Good Governance

- Advises African Parliaments to take measures to compel their respective Governments to maintain comprehensive and up-to-date case logs for courts and corruption investigations, ensure such records are made publicly accessible, and take effective steps to expedite the hearing and determination of pending corruption cases, thereby promoting transparency, accountability, and the timely delivery of justice in Africa.
- Further Advises African Parliaments to enact comprehensive asset-disclosure statutes requiring annual public declarations by officials, with protected channels for whistle-blowers.
- Encourages African Governments to establish independent anti-corruption commissions with full authority to investigate, subpoena, and prosecute wrongdoing.
- Calls upon African Governments to implement open-data initiatives to disclose budgets, procurements, and contracts, and to integrate such measures into comprehensive strategies aimed at combating graft, enhancing transparency, ensuring accountability, and strengthening public trust in governance, including the modernization of outdated tendering systems and the close monitoring of procurement processes to prevent misuse of public resources.
- Urges African Parliaments to adopt, strengthen, and enforce comprehensive ethical codes and standards of conduct for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff, incorporating clear accountability mechanisms to safeguard integrity, impartiality, and public trust.
- further Emphasizes the need for African Parliaments to demonstrate unwavering political will by leading through example ensuring that anti-corruption commitments are not only enshrined in legislation but are actively practiced and embedded in the daily operations, decision-making processes, and culture of parliamentary institutions.
- Recommends that African Parliaments create an inter-parliamentary coalition against graft to share best practices and coordinate cross-border investigations.

On Boosting Industrialization through Value Addition and Local Manufacturing

- Calls for African Parliaments to enshrine local-content requirements in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing, supported by fiscal incentives for value-adding enterprises.
- Encourages African Governments to designate special economic zones and vocational training hubs to support industry growth, and to foster collaboration with the private sector, academia, and research institutions to stimulate innovation, enhance skill development, and promote knowledge transfer in manufacturing.
- Recommends that African Parliaments establish Standing Committees on Industrialization and Trade to produce annual competitiveness reports.
- Further Recommends African Parliaments to enact transparent public-private partnership laws to facilitate technology transfer and SME financing and to strengthen both inter- and intra-continental trade by removing trade barriers,

legislating on trade routes, and improving connectivity to enhance intra-African commerce.

- Calls on African governments to invest in infrastructure, skills development, and technology transfer to enhance competitiveness and create employment opportunities through industrialization.

On Financing Climate Adaptation in Africa

- Urges African Governments to authorize sovereign green bonds and establish a statutory Climate Adaptation Fund under parliamentary oversight, ensuring that resources are ring-fenced to guarantee consistent and reliable financing for climate adaptation projects.
- Further urges African Governments to define eligibility criteria for adaptation projects in renewable energy, water resilience, and coastal defense.
- Encourages African Parliaments to enforce the “polluter pays” principle, incorporating specific provisions targeting large industries operating within their jurisdictions, and requiring them to bear the full cost of environmental damage. Such provisions shall include the imposition of environmental levies, mandatory remediation and restoration obligations, penalties for non-compliance, and contributions to environmental trust funds to support affected communities and ecosystems.
- Further encourages African Parliaments to mandate the integration of climate change education into national curricula from an early age, ensuring that learners acquire the awareness, knowledge, and practical skills necessary to address climate-related challenges and actively contribute to sustainable development throughout their lives.
- Recommends African Parliaments to amend public-financial management legislation to require climate-proof assessments for major infrastructure projects.
- Calls on African Government to start Publishing “Climate Resilience Scores” alongside quarterly fiscal reviews.
- Urges African Parliaments to create joint parliamentary civil society monitoring bodies with public impact audits.

On Inclusion and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

- Appeals to African Governments to ratify or domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, embedding mandatory accessibility standards in legislation.
- Adopts that African Parliaments shall mandate the collection and maintenance of aggregated, up-to-date data on persons living with disabilities, recognizing that effective policy formulation and program management require accurate quantification and evidence-based decision making.
- Resolves that African Legislatures shall review and eliminate outdated laws, ensuring that legal frameworks adequately protect the rights of persons living with disabilities and promote their integration across all policies and programs.
- Calls upon African Parliaments to allocate quotas and reserved seats for persons living with disabilities to guarantee their meaningful representation in legislative bodies, decision-making processes, and governance structures.
- Urges African Parliaments to legislate for the full accessibility of public spaces, facilities, and services to persons living with disabilities, removing physical, social, and institutional barriers to their participation in society.

- Encourages African Parliaments to establish dedicated offices or units within legislatures to handle issues affecting persons living with disabilities, ensuring focused oversight, policy development, and advocacy for their rights and inclusion.
- Further Encourages African Parliaments to provide mandatory inclusion and assistive technology training for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff to strengthen capacity and promote effective disability-inclusive governance.

On Accessible and Affordable Healthcare in the Context of Universal Health Coverage

- Request African Parliaments to enact laws that firmly entrench health rights, guaranteeing access to quality, affordable, and equitable healthcare for all citizens, and ensuring accountability for government delivery in the health sector.
- Advises African Parliaments to study and adopt best practices from successful models, such as Rwanda's community health initiatives, legislating policies that strengthen primary healthcare, expand community-based health services, and ensure inclusive access for all citizens.
- Encourages African Parliaments to institutionalize partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs) and patients' associations to drive innovation in the health sector, strengthen accountability, and expand access to quality healthcare services for all communities.
- Recommends that African Parliaments enact and strengthen policies to create conducive working environments, competitive remuneration packages, and professional development opportunities for health workers, to minimize brain drain and ensure that trained professionals remain in the country to serve their communities.
- Calls upon African Parliaments to legislate for targeted subsidies in the health sector, ensuring that poor and vulnerable populations have access to essential healthcare services without financial hardship.
- Also calls upon African Governments Develop contingency plans to respond to crises affecting healthcare access.

On Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Parliamentary Processes and Legislative Oversight

- Urges African Parliaments to adopt a Code of Practice for the use of Artificial Intelligence, ensuring transparency, data privacy, and ethical safeguards, and shall enact comprehensive AI regulations that define risk tiers, establish penalties for misuse, and promote responsible, accountable, and innovative applications of AI in legislative and parliamentary processes.
- Encourages African Parliaments to digitalize parliamentary infrastructure by adopting modern information and communication technologies that enhance efficiency in legislative work, improve records management, and promote transparency and accessibility of parliamentary proceedings to the public.
- Appeals African Parliaments to establish Digital Governance Units to develop secure e-parliament systems.
- Calls upon African Parliaments to establish robust structures and programs to internalize AI knowledge for both parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, ensuring they are equipped to understand, oversee, and leverage AI technologies effectively in legislative and oversight functions.

6. General Resolutions

- The 54th Conference of the CPA formally endorsed the candidature of Hon. Nontembeko Nothemba Boyce, MPL (KwaZulu-Natal), as the sole nominee for the position of CWP-International Chairperson. Furthermore, the AGM emphasized the importance of lobbying within the African alliance to secure support for her election to this position. In addition, an African lobbying team will be constituted, comprising the CWP Chairperson for the Africa Region and the CWP Subregional Representatives, to spearhead advocacy efforts and consolidate support across the continent.
- The Conference further instructed the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Treasurer, to develop a payment plan with all branches in arrears to ensure that outstanding balances are fully settled before the 55th AGM.

7. Key issues from the Society of Clerks at The Table (SoCATT) SoCATT Annual General Meeting

Opening Remarks: Delivered by the Deputy Chairperson of the SteerCom, Clerk of Malawi – indicated that this meeting was to prepare for the AGM, thus all discussions will be tabled there on 14.08.2025

SoCATT Journal: Website has been launched and hosted by Rwanda, Journal team had to develop guidelines to the website, what content, process etc. they had to develop a workplan for Journal, magazine and website. Proposal was made about hosting it on CPA website as a link. SteerCom made a resolution to have their own standalone website. Chair of journal has resigned (SA – FSPL Adv Machaka) and he was substituted by Nigeria. Need a workplan with deadlines for delivery of Journal and magazine.

CPA EXCO Representation: SOCATT requested to be observer to CPA EXCO, memo was submitted in Seychelles, EXCO declined the request. EXCO rejected without reasons and SoCATT agreed to pursue the matter.

SoCATT International Representation: Deputy Chairperson of the SteerCom nominated to serve in this role, with SoCATT's support.

Mid-Term Review Presentation: Key recommendations made to improve and popularize the Strategic Plan over the next two years; SteerCom aligns in principle. Branches may be requested to report performance against the Strategic Plan for better tracking.

Amendment of SoCATT Rules: Two key adjustments proposed (rule suspension and representative replacement). A comprehensive review was recommended over a piecemeal approach. A team led by two SteerCom members will prepare for the next AGM. Nigeria proposing 2 rules amendments. SA proposed that rules need to be reviewed holistically. SA and Zambia nominated to table reviewed rules at the November 2025 Steercom. SA also wanted to look at policy around stipends received by Steercom members.

Finance Report: Highlighted dwindling resources. Members urged to lobby sub-branches (especially Nigeria) for compliance. Discussion on stipends / per diems led to a recommendation for a governance process to guide payments.

November 2025 PDS: Theme adopted, however, host branch yet to confirm. *"Parliaments and Public Finance Management: Fostering Transparency and Accountability."*

SoCATT Learning and Sharing Workshop 14 August 2025

Opening remarks: Chair of SoCATT welcomed all, and each one introduced themselves.

Topic One: Parliamentary Openness: Engagements with CSO's for enhancement of the quality of Legislation

Presentation from West Sub Region: Parliament of Siera Leone, presenter detailed the mechanisms in place to bring the legislature closure to the people. He outlined how the various committees incorporate CSO to ensure openness of parliament. Gambia has an open day as part of the process to demystify the national assembly. KZN SA - Need a relationship with Civil Society Organizations and a structured way to interact. Zambia – working closely with civil society and becoming a useful partner in legislation processing. Kenya had MOU signed with CSO on capacity building, but mistrust remained. Parliament deals directly with members of the public. GPL SA – interaction with CSO was outlined with their own agendas, political parties coming as CSC, they challenge legislation being passed and they go to court. Working with ISD assisted greatly with resolutions and worked better than CSO.

Topic Two: Effective Strategies for Strengthening Support Mechanisms for Parliamentary Committees and House Business

Presentation from Central Sub Region: National Assembly of Zambia. Presenter outlined initiatives such as PBO, researchers and budget analysts in all committee meetings, site visits to other countries, Parliamentary Institute to be launched. Parliament TV channel also established. Constituency offices in all 10 provinces. Feedback was given by West Sub Region of Ghana – Mr Kamilo. Systems can be established to improve on efficiency and effectiveness. Research, technical support sections established. Use E parliament platforms, electronic attendance system etc. Revised the methodology of standing orders (procedures and actions of parliament). In Botswana the AG does not appear before parliament. What percentage of GDP is allocated to Ghana parliament? In Botswana it is 0.2 percent of GDP.

Topic Three: Corporate Governance in Parliamentary Administration: A Key for Transparency and Accountability

Presentation from Central Sub Region: National Assembly of Malawi. Organic Model – secretary is permanent CEO, Commission Model – CEO and Accounting Officer report to PO, The Corporate Model – secretary is separate from CEO. Anti-corruption strategy, code of conduct etc. Feedback was given by South Sub Region: National Parliament of SA – Adv Phindela. Power must be exercised within the bounds of the constitution; the rule of law must hold. Good Governance is broader than Corporate Governance. Clear structures, code of conduct, transparency, continuous engagement of stakeholders. At the heart of good governance is ethical behaviour, accountability and transparency. Rules provide for clear structures of good governance.

SoCATT AGM 14 August 2025

Opening Remarks: Delivered by the Chairperson of SoCATT Africa region the Clerk of Siera Leone – chair went through agenda. Uganda requested to remove item 6 on rules as it was not distributed 60 days to regional secretary and 45 days to members, motion adopted. SA NC objected due to several documents such as budget and mid-term review was not distributed, only minutes, matters arising, update on contributions was distributed. Agenda adopted by Gambia and Ghana. All members went through a round of introductions.

Remarks by SoCATT Africa Chairperson: Chair thanked all and informed members that he had to resign as clerk to Siera Leone to take up the SG position of the ruling party. Chair left the meeting and Acting Clerk Siera Leone took the chair, he then requested Deputy Chair (Clerk of Malawi) to chair the rest of the meeting.

Arusha SoCATT AGM minutes: adopted with minor amendments. Matters arising:

- Finalising second edition of the Journal, papers were submitted in 2016 and 2017 and not very relevant to the current environment. Chairperson no longer in employment. Clerk of The Gambia nominated to chair the journal committee. SA NCOP proposed that instead of presentations at SoCATT sessions must have papers so that papers can be published.
- Guidance on request to waiver to subbranches who are defaulting, 50% reduction offered to defaulters, and it is bearing fruit.
- Amendments of CPA constitution and development of Strategic Plan. SA NCOP proposed SoCATT must have a working group to work on the new constitution.
- Midterm evaluation was completed.
- SoCATT rules need to be reviewed. SA and Zambia nominated to table reviewed rules at the November 2025 Steercom.
- Enhanced information flow between SteerComm and members.

Budget and Financial Report: Highlighted dwindling resources. Budget for 2026 much less than 2025 in all spending areas. Members urged to lobby sub-branches (especially Nigeria) for compliance. SA KZN introduced the discussion on stipends / per diems that eventually led to a recommendation for a governance process to guide payments. SA NC stated that reserves are very low and wanted to know who audits the books, need an audit report. SoCATT spends more than CPA. Tanzania AG audited the books. SA GPL proposed the report be reworked before tabling at CPA AGM. SA L asked how audited statements can be tabled at CPA AGM when SteerComm and SoCATT did not see them. AGM will suspend and letters for suspension have been written. Finance committee has considered and adopted the report.

Draft Mid-Term Evaluation of 2022-2026 SoCATT Africa Strategic Plan: Presented by new acting chair of SoCATT (Acting Clerk of Siera Leone). Key recommendations made to improve and popularize the Strategic Plan over the next two years; SteerComm aligns in principle. Branches may be requested to report performance against the Strategic Plan for better tracking. Lack of funding and poor communication were barriers to attendance of legislatures. Need a centralised SoCATT portal. Strategic plan must be internalised. Recommendation implementation plan will be developed and shared soonest.

- Journal guidelines and Revised SoCATT rules deferred
- Update on Revised Office Bearers Mr Sage the deputy Clerk of Siera Leone chair of SoCATT Africa Region replacing the Clerk of Tanzania who resigned.
- PDS Update venue not finalised yet and discussions are underway with Botswana.
- AOB acting deputy clerk of Siera Leone serving as chair is supported by west sub region

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. **Report of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on the Western Cape Provincial Parliament's 1st Quarter Performance (financial and non-financial) 2025, dated 29 August 2025, as follows:**

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee convened on 29 August 2025 and concluded its deliberations on the Western Cape Provincial Parliament's 1st Quarter Performance (financial and non-financial), referred to it in accordance with Standing Rule 89(1).

In accordance with section 37(6) and 66(2) of the FMPPLA, the Western Cape Provincial Parliament reported to the Committee that no instructions were issued for the period under review.

2. Report of the Standing Committee on Social Development on its Child Protection Multi-Stakeholder Engagements held at the Western Cape Provincial Parliament (WCPP) on Friday, 27 June and 30 June 2025.

The Standing Committee on Social Development, having scheduled the Child Protection Multi-Stakeholder Engagements on 27 and 30 June 2025, reports as follows:

Members

The Members consisted of the following:

Democratic Alliance

Kaizer-Philander, WF (Chairperson)

Booyesen, M

Van Minnen, BM (DA)

Van Wyk, LD (DA)

African National Congress

Kamfer, F

Patriotic Alliance

Stephens, D R

Economic Freedom Fighters

Cassiem, A. (EFF)

Additional Member

Windvogel, R (ANC)

1. Introduction

The 2024/25 Strategic Objectives of the WCPP, linked to the Speakers' Priorities, which impact Committees, are as follows:

Priority 1: Building a credible WCPP; and

Priority 3: Strengthening the core business.

In accordance with its mandate, the Standing Committee on Social Development scheduled two Child Protection Multi-Stakeholder Engagements on Friday, 27 June, and Monday, 30 June 2025, in response to the alarming increase in cases of child abuse, neglect, and negligence in the province. These engagements brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including government departments, civil society organisations, academic institutions, and frontline professionals, to critically evaluate the current state of child protection in the Western Cape.

The primary objective of these engagements was to identify systemic challenges, share sector-specific insights, and collaboratively develop practical, evidence-based recommendations aimed at strengthening child protection systems and preventing harm to children. Additionally, the engagements aimed to assess the current state of child protection services in the Western Cape, identify systemic gaps and challenges in service delivery, and promote intersectoral collaboration among stakeholders.

2. Overview and background

South Africa continues to face a deepening child protection crisis, characterised by persistently high levels of violence, abuse, neglect, and trafficking. In the Western Cape, growing concerns have emerged around the lack of effective intersectoral coordination between law enforcement, social services, the judiciary, and civil society organisations. Children in the province confront a range of interconnected challenges that severely impact their safety, development, and overall well-being.

Structural issues such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment place many children at significant risk, often resulting in limited access to quality education, nutrition, and healthcare. Additionally, the prevalence of domestic violence, substance abuse, and gang activity in certain communities further exposes children to trauma and unsafe living conditions. Persistent cases of child neglect, abuse, and exploitation, especially in under-resourced areas, remain a major concern.

These issues are further compounded by systemic shortcomings, including gaps in service delivery, insufficient interdepartmental coordination, a critical shortage of social workers and child protection officers, and ongoing budgetary constraints. These factors hinder the province's ability to deliver effective, timely support to vulnerable children.

Considering these challenges, the Standing Committee on Social Development resolved to convene a two-day Child Protection Multi-Stakeholder Engagement on Friday, 27 June and Monday, 30 June 2025. This decision was informed by oversight visits, community engagements, and recent reports that exposed significant weaknesses in the child protection ecosystem, particularly in intersectoral collaboration and resource allocation.

The Committee acknowledged that ensuring the safety and well-being of children is a shared responsibility, requiring a coordinated and inclusive approach across government departments, civil society, communities, and other key stakeholders. The primary aim of these engagements was to facilitate meaningful dialogue, identify practical and sustainable solutions, and strengthen partnerships to tackle both persistent and emerging child protection challenges in the province.

By bringing together a diverse array of stakeholders, including representatives from government, civil society, academia, and the private sector, the Committee sought to ensure that policy formulation and implementation are grounded in the lived experiences and insights of those working on the frontlines of child protection. Moreover, it reaffirmed its commitment to placing child protection at the heart of the Western Cape's social development agenda.

Key participants who contributed to the engagements included the Department of Social Development (DSD), Department of Health and Wellness, Department of Home Affairs, South African Police Service (SAPS), Western Cape Education Department, South African Human Rights Commission, Public Protector's Office, Office of the Western

Cape Commissioner for Children, Children's Institute, Research Team from the University of Cape Town (UCT) and other academic experts, as well as NGOs such as Mosaic, Equal Education Law Centre, DeafSA, and various community representatives and child rights advocates.

This report presents the key outcomes, findings, and input for policy recommendations and strategic planning that emerged from the two-day Multi-Stakeholder Engagement convened by the Standing Committee on Social Development.

3. The following stakeholders presented and gave input during the sessions:

3.1. Input by the Children's Institute, University of Cape Town (UCT)

Ms L Jamieson, Senior Researcher from the Children's Institute, gave input on the recent research of the Children's Institute conducted in collaboration with Masimanyane Women's Rights International, which highlights the deep interconnections between intimate partner violence (IPV) and violence against children (VAC). These forms of violence often co-occur within households and share common drivers, contributing to an intergenerational cycle of trauma and abuse. Despite high-level governmental commitments to address gender-based violence (GBV), service delivery remains fragmented, particularly in rural communities where cultural and linguistic barriers further hinder access to justice and support.

3.1.1. Language and Cultural Barriers in Service Provision

The research highlighted that language plays a critical role in shaping access to services and conveying experiences of violence. The legacy of Apartheid, which devalued indigenous languages and institutionalised English as the language of record, continues to marginalise Black South Africans. In the Eastern Cape, where isiXhosa is widely spoken, service providers often fail to offer linguistically appropriate support. Victims struggle to articulate their experiences due to cultural taboos and inadequate translation practices, especially within the criminal justice system. Protection orders and legal proceedings conducted in English are frequently misunderstood, undermining their effectiveness and placing women and children at further risk.

3.1.2. Service Gaps for Children in Domestic Violence Contexts.

Children exposed to IPV are often overlooked in service provision. Shelters primarily cater to women, with limited facilities or therapeutic services for children. Adolescents, particularly boys, are frequently excluded, leading to further trauma and behavioural issues. The lack of integrated services means children are either left behind or referred to external agencies with long waiting lists. This separation not only exacerbates children's anxiety but also reinforces the notion that their recovery is secondary to that of their mothers. The absence of culturally sensitive, child-centric therapeutic interventions perpetuates the cycle of violence.

3.1.3. Systemic Silos and Legal Framework Limitations

South Africa's legal framework, while comprehensive, creates separate systems for women and children, resulting in siloed service delivery. The Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998) and the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) do not adequately coordinate responses to co-victimisation. Funding models fail to support integrated care, and shelters lack resources for early childhood development and transportation. The exclusion of

older boys from shelters and the absence of therapeutic services for children further highlight systemic shortcomings. Without integrated, culturally appropriate services, the intergenerational transmission of violence remains unaddressed.

3.1.4. Child Protection Failures and Case Studies

The Child Death Review and Child Abuse Tracking Study reveal alarming failures in child protection. Cases of fatal child abuse, such as starvation and blunt force trauma, underscore the lack of early intervention and inadequate risk assessments. Children known to protection agencies often remain in unsafe environments due to poor coordination between social services and law enforcement. Administrative records undercount cases, and reporting delays compromise evidence collection and medical treatment. The studies also expose reluctance among Social Workers to pursue legal action against parents, even in severe abuse cases.

3.1.5. Challenges faced by NGOs and Frontline Workers

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) face increasing challenges, including complex cases, reduced funding, and high staff turnover. Social workers often lack training and supervision and presiding officers in children's courts are frequently uninformed. Teachers, who play a critical role in identifying abuse, face compassion fatigue and backlash from parents. The lack of intersectoral collaboration among SAPS, DSD, and NPA results in poor case outcomes and fragmented services. Children and families known to protection agencies often receive inadequate support, leading to long-term harm or death.

3.1.6. Recommendations and way forward

To address these gaps, the Children's Institute recommended that services must be linguistically and culturally inclusive, recognising the rights and dignity of women and children. Witness statements and court proceedings should be conducted in indigenous languages, with accurate translations to ensure comprehension. Shelters should accommodate all children and provide integrated therapeutic services. Long-term, structured interventions targeting men and boys are essential to shift harmful gender norms. Strengthening intersectoral collaboration, improving risk assessments, and ensuring adequate supervision of social workers are critical to building a functional child protection system.

3.2. Input by a Research Team from UCT, Global Parenting Initiative

Ms C Bruyns, SWIFT Principal Investigator & Project Manager and Ms. C Katzev, SWIFT Co-Investigator & Project Coordinator, Research Team from the UCT, Global Parenting Initiative, gave input during the multi-stakeholder engagement on Friday, 27 June 2025. They indicated that the Supporting Wellness through Integrated Family Training (SWIFT) study is part of the Global Parenting Initiative and aims to embed digital parenting support into routine service delivery across provincial health and social services. The initiative responds to the urgent need for scalable, cost-effective interventions to address child maltreatment and family stress, particularly in under-resourced communities. The study is being implemented in collaboration with the Departments of Social Development, Health and Wellness, and Education in the Province.

3.2.1. Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) Programmes

PLH programmes are evidence-based, open-source, and originally developed in South Africa. They aim to reduce violence against women and children, improve mental and physical health, and support child development. The programmes include in-person formats (e.g., Sinovuyo for teens and young children) and digital formats such as ParentApp, ParentText (WhatsApp chatbot), and ParentChat (online support groups). These tools are designed to be accessible even on basic mobile phones and are adaptable to different languages and cultural contexts.

3.2.2. Digital Tools and Their Impact

ParentText and ParentApp have shown promising results in reducing child maltreatment, physical and emotional abuse, and increasing father involvement and online safety. ParentText, in particular, is interactive and customisable based on child age, gender, and parent preferences. It includes modules on improving parent-child relationships and keeping children safe, covering topics such as community safety, crisis response, online safety, and sexual violence prevention.

3.2.3. Referral and Support Services

ParentText includes a referral system triggered by keywords like “HELP,” directing users to emergency services, mental health support, family counselling, legal aid, and LGBTQIA+ resources. These referrals are designed to connect families with appropriate services quickly and efficiently, enhancing the safety net for vulnerable children and caregivers.

3.2.4. Implementation and Scalability

The SWIFT study is being rolled out in phases, starting with stakeholder engagement and community buy-in. Phase 2 involves testing recruitment strategies at clinics and collecting data through chatbot surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The programme is highly scalable, with delivery costs as low as \$5.98 per family for hybrid formats. Given that 96% of South African households own a mobile phone and use WhatsApp, the potential reach is vast.

3.2.5. Feedback and community engagement

Parent feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with caregivers reporting improved relationships with their children, increased awareness of their needs, and greater involvement in their education and well-being. The programme is being promoted through mobile clinics, pharmacies, and community outreach, ensuring visibility and accessibility.

3.2.6. Conclusion and Call to Action

The SWIFT team urged the Western Cape Government to support the integration of digital parenting programmes into provincial services. These tools offer a low-cost, high-impact solution to address child protection challenges, especially in contexts of limited resources and high caseloads. The initiative aligns with national priorities and legislative frameworks, including the Children’s Act (Act 38 of 2005) and the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children.

3.3. Input by the Department of Home Affairs

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA), represented by Acting Provincial Manager Ms. I. Michaels, presented a comprehensive overview of its operations, infrastructure, and strategic initiatives in Western Cape. The presentation aimed to inform the Provincial Parliament about the department's footprint, governance structure, birth registration efforts, anti-trafficking mandate, and outreach programmes. It emphasized DHA's role in enabling access to essential services and safeguarding constitutional rights, particularly for vulnerable populations.

The Department of Home Affairs maintains 30 front offices across five districts and one metro in the Western Cape, with 17 of these equipped with immigration inspectorate capacity. Despite setbacks such as the destruction of the Swellendam office in 2023, the department has established temporary facilities and continues to expand its reach. Notably, 29 of the offices are modernized, and mobile units are deployed across rural and underserved areas. The department also operates in five banks and 17 connected health facilities, with plans to expand into the Cape Town Civic Centre, Riversdale, and Hermanus.

The Western Cape DHA is managed by a senior leadership team, including District Managers responsible for specific geographic areas. Each District Manager oversees a network of offices, health facility connections, and mobile units. The presentation detailed the contact information and operational scope of each District Manager, highlighting the department's decentralized approach to service delivery and responsiveness to local needs.

A central theme of the presentation was the critical importance of birth registration. The DHA emphasized that every child has the right to a name and identity, as enshrined in Section 28 of the Constitution. The department has activated 23 birth registration points in high-volume health facilities and provides roaming services to 29 others. However, challenges persist, including late registration of births (LRB), which exposes the national population register to fraud. Contributing factors include lack of access in rural areas, young or undocumented mothers, and cultural practices.

To address these challenges, the DHA is enhancing collaboration with the Department of Health and other stakeholders. This includes tracing unregistered births, co-locating services in health facilities, and deploying mobile units to predictable service points. The High Impact Outreach Program, scheduled for August 2025 in the Cape Winelands District, aims to saturate rural areas with DHA services for one week. These outreach efforts rely on partnerships with local municipalities for venues, utilities, and community mobilization.

The DHA outlined its mandate under the Immigration Act (Act 13 of 2002) and its role in combating human trafficking. In collaboration with SAPS, DSD, NPA, and civil society, the department follows a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to regularize the status of victims of trafficking (VOT). This includes conducting interviews, issuing visitor visas, and coordinating repatriation when necessary. The presentation also introduced the provincial TIP (Trafficking in Persons) task team and emphasized the need for improved identification, training, and data systems.

Despite progress, the DHA faces several challenges. These include limited capacity among immigration officers to identify trafficking victims, the need for rapid response teams, and gaps in data collection for trafficking research. The department also highlighted the importance of strengthening relationships with adoption agencies and

improving interdepartmental coordination. Addressing these issues is critical to enhancing the effectiveness and integrity of DHA's services.

3.4 Input by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) on legal and institutional gaps in child protection

Adv M Allie, Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, detailed the prosecutorial challenges in cases involving vulnerable groups. She reported that the NPA has adopted a more victim-centric approach, recognizing the importance of witness cooperation in successful prosecutions. However, high withdrawal rates, limited resources, and systemic delays hinder progress. The NPA highlighted gaps in the trafficking in persons framework, including the lack of accredited shelters for child victims and insufficient training for frontline officers. The need for improved community outreach and inter-agency coordination was strongly emphasized.

3.5. Input by Mosaic, Scalabrini Centre, and Mitchell's Plain Community Police Forum (CPF)

Stakeholders such as Mosaic, Scalabrini Centre, and Mitchell's Plain CPF gave input on community-based perspectives and frontline realities, and shared ground-level experiences of child protection failures. Mosaic highlighted the intersection of domestic violence and child vulnerability, particularly within schools, and called for better vetting of educators and trauma-informed school environments. Scalabrini Centre raised concerns about the misdiagnosis of trafficking cases and the lack of durable solutions for migrant children. Mitchell's Plain CPF underscored the emotional toll of delayed justice and the need for legislative reform to address bail, sentencing, and evidentiary standards.

3.6. Input by Stellenbosch University on the health sector's role in early detection and prevention

Dr. T Vessels, Community Paediatrics: Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences from Stellenbosch University, and the Department of Health provided critical insights into the health system's role in child protection. She highlighted the lack of awareness among healthcare workers regarding child rights and abuse indicators, and the trauma experienced by staff themselves. The Child Death Review panels revealed that most child deaths occur outside of hospitals, pointing to failures in community-level care and access. Dr. Vessels advocated trauma-informed care across all levels of service delivery and emphasized the importance of nurturing care from pregnancy onward.

3.7. Input by the Western Cape Provincial Office of the Public Protector

Mr S Magele, the Investigator at the Western Cape Provincial office of the Public Protector, gave input on oversight and accountability mechanisms. The Office of the Public Protector outlined its role in exercising oversight over state institutions mandated to protect children. Systematic investigations into gender-based violence and maintenance enforcement revealed significant gaps in service delivery, including poor feedback mechanisms and a lack of victim-friendly facilities. The Public Protector emphasized the need for improved collaboration, particularly in addressing complaints related to the Department of Home Affairs and SAPS and committed to ongoing investigations into maintenance and child protection failures.

3.8. Input by the Governing Body Foundation (GBF) on the challenges faced by children in the Western Cape

Mr D Campbell, the Executive Officer of the Governing Body Foundation (GBF), Western Cape, gave input and highlighted the multifaceted challenges confronting children in the Western Cape, particularly those in under-resourced communities. Drawing from his experience as a school principal and GBF executive, he emphasised the critical role of education in breaking cycles of poverty and social deprivation. However, systemic barriers continue to undermine children's access to quality education and holistic development.

3.8.1. Access to quality education

Many schools in socio-economically challenged areas are under-resourced and vulnerable to crime and violence. These schools, which should serve as safe havens and provide quality education to marginalised children, often fall short. Overcrowded classrooms, post cuts, and budgetary constraints, exacerbated by national funding uncertainties, result in overworked educators and diminished learning outcomes. Early Childhood Development (ECD), a vital foundation for lifelong learning, remains undervalued and underfunded. Despite legislative progress, such as making Grade R compulsory, the state lacks the resources to implement these changes effectively.

3.8.2. Societal factors impacting learning

Children's ability to learn is deeply affected by their social environments. High levels of violence, especially in areas like the Cape Flats, contribute to trauma and insecurity. Unsafe children cannot learn effectively. While district-based Social Workers and Psychologists provide support, their reach is limited. Overcrowded living conditions, food insecurity, and exposure to abuse further hinder children's educational engagement. The quintile system used to classify schools often fails to reflect current demographics, leaving hungry children without access to the feeding schemes.

3.8.3. Additional Barriers to Development

Children in single-parent households or foster care often shoulder adult responsibilities, impacting their ability to study. Substance abuse in homes and communities leads to neglect and perpetuates cycles of poverty. Teenage pregnancy disrupts education and increases vulnerability. The digital divide excludes many children from online learning, while those with access face risks such as cyberbullying, pornography addiction, and social media-induced anxiety. Discrimination against children with disabilities, migrant children, and LGBTQ+ youth further compounds exclusion and emotional distress.

3.8.4. Call to Action

Mr. Campbell concluded by affirming the education system's role in shaping responsible, empowered citizens who can contribute to societal transformation. While many educators and school leaders are working tirelessly to support children, more must be done. He called for collective responsibility and increased investment in education, infrastructure, and support services to ensure that all children, especially the most vulnerable, can thrive.

3.9. Briefing by the Department of Social Development (DSD) on the Child Protection Services and the associated challenges in the Western Cape

Mr T Kwakwini, Directorate: Children & Families, proceeded to brief the meeting on the child protection services offered by the Department of Social Development and the associated child protection challenges in the province. Mr Kwakwini reported that the Department of Social Development (DSD) in the Western Cape provides a comprehensive range of child protection services in collaboration with Designated Child Protection Organisations (DCPOs), in accordance with the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005). These services span awareness, prevention, early intervention, statutory care, and reunification efforts.

3.9.1. Key Programmes and Services

Awareness and Prevention initiatives focus on educating communities to prevent child abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking, gender-based violence (GBV), and teenage pregnancy. Early intervention programmes include parenting skills, life skills for youth, therapeutic services, and behaviour modification.

Statutory Services involve investigations into abuse, alternative care placements (temporary safe care, foster care, adoption), mediation, and support groups for foster families.

Reunification Services support children returning to their families, including transitional and aftercare programmes.

Alternative Care and Adoption

Alternative care is categorised into levels based on the child's needs and legal framework, ranging from foster care to secure care under the Child Justice Act. Adoption services are rendered by accredited NGOs and private practitioners, with some organisations authorised for inter-country adoptions. The Western Cape Adoption Coalition coordinates efforts and provides aftercare and tracing services.

International Social Services (ISS)

ISS facilitates cross-border child protection, including repatriation, support for migrant and trafficked children, and documentation services. The Western Cape DSD acts as the national correspondent for ISS, coordinating services and attending national forums and steering committees.

3.9.2. Challenges and Systemic Gaps

Key challenges include staff rotation, lack of supervision, shortage of safe care and foster parents, limited trauma-informed services, and safety risks for staff. Systemic gaps are primarily due to funding constraints affecting programme sustainability and quality.

Foster Care Statistics

The Department reported that a total of 42,882 children's are in foster care, with 316 Social Workers dedicated to supervision. Legal orders under sections 159, 186, and 176 of the Children's Act are actively implemented. Cluster foster care involves 7 organisations managing 64 homes for 314 children.

Regional and Operational Challenges

Regions face high levels of violence, insufficient funding, staff shortages, and limited placement options, especially in rural areas. Courts often delay processing cases, and mental health services are scarce. Infrastructure and administrative burdens further strain service delivery.

Human Trafficking and GBV

The briefing highlighted the intersection of GBV and human trafficking, with Cape Town identified as a hotspot. Children affected by trafficking suffer educational deprivation, trauma, and adverse behavioural outcomes. Adults face substance abuse, mental health issues, and family fragmentation.

Care for Foreign and Trafficked Children

Children of foreign nationalities and trafficked youth are placed in Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCCs) with specialised support. In 2024/25, 43 foreign children and 10 trafficked children were accommodated, with successful repatriations and participation in advocacy events.

Residential Alternative Care and Facility Management

The DSD operates nine centres and funds 55 NPO CYCCs. A centralised management model ensures quality assurance, admissions, and professional services. The HUB oversees training, supervision, and compliance with national standards.

Data and Capacity

On a given night, 3,618 children were in residential care, with 806 due to criminal behaviour and 480 due to unmanaged behavioural issues. Specialist services address mental health and conduct disorders, though diagnosis remains a challenge.

Strengths and Innovations

Strengths include centralised management, specialist services, infrastructure upgrades, and a training academy. The model is nationally recognised and ensures continuity of care. Incident management and early release policies enhance service delivery.

Mitigation Strategies

To address challenges such as bed shortages, staffing gaps, and safety risks, the DSD is expanding infrastructure, enhancing recruitment, and improving training. Financial sustainability remains a concern, with ongoing efforts to secure funding and support high-risk services.

3.9.3. Recommendations for Improvement

Recommendations include strengthening coordination across sectors, investing in capacity building for social service practitioners, improving access to therapeutic services, and enhancing prevention and awareness campaigns. Emphasis is placed on training, supervision, and the use of digital systems for child protection tracking.

3.10. Input by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)

Commissioner N Kwinana from the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) provided insights from the SAHRC monitoring of children on the move, particularly undocumented and refugee children. The Commission reported significant barriers to accessing legal documentation, education, and healthcare, exacerbated by poor coordination between the Department of Home Affairs and DSD. Case studies from organizations like Scalabrini and Cape Town Homestead illustrated the challenges faced by children living and working on the streets, including trauma, lack of identity documents, and limited access to consistent psychological support. The SAHRC called for improved collaboration, inclusive education systems, and better aftercare services.

3.11. Input by the Office of the Western Cape Commissioner for Children

Mr C Cyster, Acting Director from the Office of the Western Cape Commissioner for Children, gave input during the meeting. He reported that the Western Cape's child protection and alternative care system is governed by a robust legal and policy framework yet faces significant implementation challenges. The system includes formal care modalities such as foster care, child and youth care centres (CYCCs), and temporary safe care, as well as informal arrangements like kinship care. These services are guided by the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) and supported by national and provincial policies, including the White Paper on Social Welfare and the National Child Care and Protection Policy. Despite this, systemic constraints, such as underfunding, high caseloads, and limited intersectoral coordination, hinder effective service delivery.

The sociological landscape of parental care in the Western Cape is marked by diverse family structures. A higher proportion of children live with both biological parents compared to other provinces, yet single-parent households, particularly those headed by mothers, remain prevalent. Risk factors contributing to child vulnerability include poverty, substance abuse, gender-based violence, and poor parenting skills. Protective factors such as safe and nurturing relationships, parental resilience, and community support networks are present but often insufficient to counterbalance the risks.

Kinship care, while culturally appropriate and widely practiced, remains largely informal and unregulated. It offers emotional stability and continuity for children but lacks formal support structures, monitoring, and financial resources. Formal care modalities face their challenges. Foster care is burdened by administrative backlogs, inadequate training for foster parents, and limited psychosocial support. CYCCs, intended as a last resort, struggle with funding shortages, staff retention, and insufficient therapeutic programming. Temporary safe care, designed for emergency placements, suffers from a lack of standardized procedures and a shortage of vetted safety parents.

Reunification services, critical for reintegrating children with their families, are underdeveloped due to resource constraints and complex household dynamics. The absence of effective care planning and continuity in case management further complicates these efforts. Children with disabilities and migrant children face additional barriers, including discrimination, limited access to specialized services, and inadequate legal protections.

The Western Cape Government's Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Strategy introduces the Pyramid Reversal concept, aiming to reduce statutory interventions by strengthening early support services. Core PEI services include food security, economic strengthening, health promotion, educational support, and psychosocial care. However, these services are inconsistently implemented due to funding limitations, workforce shortages, and fragmented interdepartmental collaboration.

Recommendations by the Office of the Western Cape Commissioner for Children emphasized the need to strengthen PEI and family preservation programmes, expand emergency safe care and improve foster care systems, enhance CYCC operations and reunification services, ensure adequate budget allocations and workforce development and foster meaningful coordination across sectors and improve monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Mr Cyster further indicated that while Western Cape's alternative care system is grounded in sound legal and policy frameworks, its effectiveness is compromised by systemic and operational gaps. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach that prioritizes the best interests of the child, supports families, and ensures sustainable, community-based care solutions.

3.12 Input by StellCARE on the child protection-related challenges

Ms. B Nieuwodt, the Director, StellCARE, gave input on the lives of children in the Western Cape. Issues raised included poverty, gang violence, school expulsions, lack of trauma services, and the challenges faced by children with disabilities. A major concern raised was the overwhelming caseloads faced by social workers, with some managing up to 185 foster care cases. This excludes additional responsibilities such as services to foster parents, reunification efforts, and children in Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCCs). Additionally, a lack of safe spaces for abused children and the bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining birth certificates were also reported, and the need for better support for NGO Social Workers, including fair salaries and wellness programmes, was emphasised.

3.13. Briefing by the Department of Health and Wellness on mental health cases, trauma support services and forensic pathology services, specifically addressing death cases involving children in the province.

Dr Rene Nassen, the Head of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, presented a comprehensive overview of the mental health status of children and adolescents in the Western Cape. Adopting a life-course approach, the Department highlighted the critical importance of early intervention, particularly within the first 1,000 days of life. This emphasis was supported by reference to the Heckman Equation, which underscores the significant economic and developmental returns of investing in early childhood mental health.

The presentation underscored the severe economic impact of untreated perinatal mental health conditions, which cost the country an estimated R49.3 billion annually. Investment in perinatal mental health yields substantial returns, with every R1 spent generating an estimated R4.70 in social and economic benefits. Mental health services in the province are delivered across three tiers of care from community-based support to tertiary hospitals with a strong focus on early detection, psychosocial rehabilitation, and family support.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), including abuse, neglect, poverty, and exposure to violence, were identified as key drivers of mental health challenges and increased suicide risk among children. The Department reported an alarming rise in psychiatric admissions and suicides among individuals under 18, with the highest incidence recorded in the City of Cape Town. Suicide case reviews revealed recurring factors such as family conflict, untreated depression, and significant emotional distress.

In response to these challenges, the Department has launched the Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (iCAMHS) outreach team and the ICAMHS Strengthening Project. These initiatives aim to expand access to services through digitisation, targeted training, and integration with broader government programmes such as Planet Youth. The presentation concluded with a call for a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society Approach to mental health, underlining the urgency of early intervention, multisectoral collaboration, and the prevention of ACEs.

Ms. V. Thompson, Director of the Forensic Pathology Service, led the second presentation, which focused on trauma support services, with a particular emphasis on child protection and cases involving sexual offences. She reported that medical and emergency care services are provided at 40 designated health facilities, including 10 Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs), which offer integrated, 24-hour services for survivors of sexual violence, domestic abuse, and child maltreatment. These centres also support police investigations and ensure referrals for psychosocial support.

Data from 2022 to 2025 indicates a steady rise in reported sexual offences, particularly among adult females and males under the age of 18. Victim care pathways include mandatory reporting in accordance with the Sexual Offences Act (Act 32 of 2007) and the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005). Key referral roles are played by healthcare providers, Educators, and Social Workers, who are critical in initiating and sustaining access to care.

Ms Thompson also presented findings from the Child Death Review (CDR) initiative, first piloted in 2014 and now operational in five regions across the province. These multi-agency teams investigate and manage child deaths, especially those related to abuse and neglect, with the aim of improving accountability, case resolution, and systemic response. CDR findings show that fatal child abuse most often occurs within the first year of life and is typically perpetrated by close family members. Common contributing factors include mental illness, substance use, and broader social neglect.

The Department stressed the need to strengthen interdepartmental collaboration, enhance risk assessments, and improve the quality of criminal investigations. The CDR process has already led to improved communication among service providers and more effective case management. In some cases, this has resulted in accelerated legal outcomes and better protection for surviving children.

3.14. Input by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) on its strategy to improve child protection through multi-stakeholder collaboration

Mr I du Preez, the Director: Inclusive and Specialised Education Support from the Western Cape Education Department, gave input during the multi-stakeholder engagement on Monday, 30 June 2025. His presentation focused on the comprehensive strategy by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to enhance child protection through multi-stakeholder collaboration. He reported that the WCED's Safe Schools Programme employs a three-pronged strategy of environmental, developmental, and systemic interventions to foster secure and conducive learning environments.

The Positive Behaviour Programme, central to this initiative, addresses behavioural challenges through structured support and teacher capacity building. It incorporates evidence-based approaches like Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (PBIS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL), underpinned by the Circle of Courage and ecological systems theory. These frameworks promote trauma-informed care and relational

interventions, emphasising the teacher's role in fostering resilience and behavioural change.

3.14.1. Planet Youth Initiative

Planet Youth align with WCED's strategic goals for holistic learner development and educational equity. It focuses on early intervention and prevention by addressing environmental and behavioural risk factors. The initiative uses schools as community hubs for coordinated interventions and relies on biannual surveys to inform data-driven decision-making. Key areas of alignment include substance abuse prevention, parental involvement, mental health support, and inclusive education.

3.14.2. Wellness Hubs

Wellness hubs have been established across various districts to provide psychosocial support tailored to the needs of learners, parents, and educators. These hubs are staffed by Social Workers and supported by internal and external service providers, including NGOs and government departments. Each hub is symbolically marked with values such as peace, justice, and empathy, reinforcing the ethos of care and support. The hubs are scheduled to be operational by the third term of 2025.

3.14.3. Behaviour Support Pathway

The Behaviour Support Pathway offers tiered levels of intervention, low, moderate, and high, to address behavioural barriers to learning. Low-level support focuses on creating safe learning environments and teacher development. Moderate-level support targets at-risk learners through school-based and district-based support teams. High-level support involves intensive interventions for learners facing severe behavioural challenges, including referrals to specialised centres and departments.

3.14.4. Training and Community Engagement

Regular training sessions are conducted for teachers to enhance their capacity in managing behavioural issues. Topics include trauma-informed practices, violence prevention, and substance abuse. Parents are engaged through targeted interventions and community radio programmes that promote positive parenting and discipline strategies. Teachers can also access a 30-hour SACE-accredited online course on Positive Behaviour via WCED eLearning.

3.14.5. SWIMS System

The Social Work Integrated Management System (SWIMS) is supported by WCED to centralise child protection data, improve interdepartmental coordination, and enhance case tracking. It aims to reduce administrative burdens on social workers, allowing more direct support to children and families.

3.14.6. Abuse No More Protocol and Legislative Amendments

The Abuse No More protocol is reinforced by recent legislative amendments, including the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act, the Sexual Offences Amendment Act, and the Domestic Violence Amendment Act. These updates strengthen the legal framework for addressing gender-based violence and child protection.

The WCED's integrated approach to child protection, centred on values-driven education and relational support, seeks to transform schools into centres of belonging and excellence. Through strategic partnerships, data-informed planning, and holistic interventions, the department aims to nurture respectful, responsible citizens and restore the spirit of humanity in education.

3.15 Input by SAPS Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS)

Mr. M. Tantsi, the Provincial Head of the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) Unit, responded to questions related to SAPS's role in child protection. He highlighted the alarming rise in cases of child abuse, neglect, and gang recruitment in the Western Cape. Mr. Tantsi reported that many children go missing as a result of neglect and increasing gang activity, with school dropouts being particularly vulnerable to recruitment. He expressed concern about children's access to cellphones at school, stating that this contributes to the problem. He urged parents to be vigilant and monitor their children's cellphone usage regularly.

Mr. Tantsi further reported a rise in sexual offences occurring at schools. In response, the FCS unit has begun implementing awareness campaigns in schools to tackle this growing issue. He encouraged stakeholders to collaborate with SAPS in conducting joint awareness initiatives to address these challenges and enhance community involvement.

4. Key findings noted during the Child Protection Multi-Stakeholder Engagements

- 4.1. Poor Coordination: Limited collaboration between SAPS, DSD, and the judiciary results in fragmented responses to child abuse cases.
- 4.2. Inadequate Data: Lack of reliable data on child abuse prevalence and outcomes, especially regarding secondary victimisation and retaliation.
- 4.3. Underreporting: Only 1 in 10 cases of child abuse are reported, with many children remaining invisible to the system.
- 4.4. Delayed Justice: Cases often take years to reach court, with victims experiencing secondary trauma and procedural delays.
- 4.5. Children with Disabilities: Deaf and disabled children face significant barriers in accessing justice and support services due to communication gaps and a lack of inclusive policies.
- 4.6. Unregistered Children: Many children are not registered at birth, limiting access to social grants and services. Late registration processes are cumbersome and vulnerable to fraud.
- 4.7. Digital Parenting Programs: UCT's SWIFT study and ParentText initiative show promise in delivering low-cost, scalable parenting support via WhatsApp, with positive feedback from rural communities.
- 4.8. Child Death Review: Reveals critical insights into preventable deaths and the need for early intervention, especially in the first year of life.

5. Key challenges

- 5.1. Resource Constraints: NGOs and frontline workers face burnout, violence, and inadequate funding, leading to high attrition rates.
- 5.2. Legislative Gaps: Despite robust legal frameworks (e.g., Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005)), enforcement and compliance remain weak.
- 5.3. Cultural and Societal Norms: Deep-rooted violence, poverty, and gender norms perpetuate abuse and hinder prevention efforts.

- 5.4. Limited Accessibility: Lack of sign language interpreters and disability-inclusive services in police stations, courts, and shelters.

6. Recommendations

The multi-stakeholders recommended that the Western Cape Government should,

6.1. Strengthen Intersectoral Collaboration

- Establish formal protocols for case referrals and joint case management between SAPS, DSD, and the judiciary.
- Create integrated data systems to track child protection cases across departments.

6.2. Expand Inclusive Services

- Ensure availability of sign language interpreters and disability-sensitive training for all frontline workers.
- Include organisations like DeafSA in referral networks and policy consultations.

6.3. Improve Birth Registration

- Increase awareness campaigns on the importance of registering births within 30 days.
- Expand mobile and hospital-based registration services, especially in rural areas.

6.4. Scale Digital Interventions

- Support the rollout of ParentText and similar programs across clinics, schools, and community centers.
- Provide zero-rated access and offline options to ensure inclusivity.

6.5. Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

- Prioritise funding for community-based violence prevention programmes.
- Train educators and healthcare workers to identify and respond to signs of abuse.

6.6. Legislative and Policy Reform

- Enforce compliance with Section 110 of the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) regarding mandatory reporting.
- Review and streamline late registration processes to prevent fraud and ensure child rights.

6.7. The Domestic Violence Act and the Children's Act should be revised to improve child protection and enhance the child protection framework.

6.8. Early Identification and Prevention: Expand parenting programmes and support services for pregnant women, mothers of young children, and boys. Integrate these with community health services to improve access and outcomes.

6.9. Comprehensive Assessments: Train Social Workers to assess risk, family dynamics, and child needs using standardised tools. Develop concrete protection plans and ensure accountability in case management.

- 6.10. Safe Environments: Improve coordination between social services and police to remove perpetrators and protect children. Strengthen caregiver-child relationships to support recovery.
- 6.11. Therapeutic Interventions: Review and redesign therapeutic programmes to address complex, continuous trauma. Adopt evidence-based models like trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy and explore para-professional delivery to address resource constraints.
- 6.12. Consider integrating the Social Workers currently under the Western Cape Education Department into the Department of Social Development for improved coordination, streamlined service delivery, and enhanced support to vulnerable learners and communities.
- 6.13. The Department of Social Development should establish a formal reporting mechanism to identify and address foster parents who are deemed unfit to provide proper care.

In addition, the Committee recommended that:

- 6.14. The Office of the Western Cape Commissioner for Children should be formally integrated into the province's transversal child protection framework as an independent oversight and coordination partner.
- 6.15. The Committee should explore the possibility of establishing an Ad Hoc Committee on Child Protection Reform in the Western Cape.

7. Conclusion

The two-day Child Protection Multi-Stakeholder Engagements underscored the urgent need for a coordinated, adequately resourced, and inclusive child protection system in the Western Cape. The discussions laid bare the scale of the crisis affecting children, while also illuminating the potential for transformative change. Despite South Africa's strong legal foundation, systemic challenges, such as fragmented service delivery, poor interdepartmental coordination, and insufficient responses, continue to leave children vulnerable and perpetuate cycles of violence and neglect. Legal reform alone is insufficient; implementation must be strengthened through intersectoral collaboration, culturally responsive approaches, and trauma-informed care.

Stakeholders voiced a united commitment to reform, calling for greater collaboration across departments, increased investment in prevention and early intervention, and the meaningful participation of children and communities in shaping policy. The Department of Social Development (DSD) acknowledged the constraints imposed by limited budgets, which have shifted focus towards statutory services at the cost of preventative programming. Nonetheless, steps are being taken to revitalize evidence-based early interventions and attract private-sector funding through initiatives like the Cape Care Fund.

Family preservation emerged as a central theme, particularly in the context of supporting mothers in rehabilitation. Participants advocated for integrated service models that allow mothers to retain custody of their children during treatment, balancing safety with the preservation of family bonds. The DSD highlighted promising pilot projects in the gender-based violence (GBV) sector that link substance abuse treatment, GBV support, and childcare services, and committed to exploring these models further.

Civil society representatives and community members shared powerful testimonies about the lived experiences of children, raising concerns around poverty, gang violence, school

exclusions, lack of trauma support, and the specific barriers faced by children with disabilities. Calls were made for the creation of safer spaces for abused children, streamlined access to identity documentation, and strengthened mental health services. The documentation backlog impacting hundreds of children remains a key issue, with collaborative efforts underway between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Home Affairs to address it.

The safety and well-being of frontline workers were also repeatedly raised. Social workers and NGO staff, particularly those in high-risk areas, face daily threats to their safety. While measures such as panic buttons, unmarked vehicles, and inter-district interventions have been introduced, stakeholders emphasized the need for more robust support systems, including staff wellness initiatives, fair compensation, and regular trauma debriefings.

NGOs urged for expanded authority in emergencies, including the ability to remove children to places of safety when necessary. They also expressed concern over unregistered organizations operating without oversight, which not only puts children at risk but also undermines regulatory frameworks.

The Western Cape Education Department presented plans to roll out Wellness Hubs in priority school districts, coordinated by local support teams. Although funding limitations prevent universal rollout, implementation will be prioritized in the most vulnerable areas. Additionally, digital solutions were proposed to help mitigate high caseloads and resource constraints, with stakeholders invited to submit proposals for further exploration.

The engagement concluded with a shared recognition that piecemeal efforts are no longer sufficient. The current child protection system is fragmented and underfunded, and stakeholders were unanimous in calling for systemic, sustained reform backed by strong monitoring and meaningful investment.

This report reflects the voices heard and provides a clear mandate for urgent, actionable reform, and there is a unified resolve to ensure that no child is left behind in the Western Cape.

8. Acknowledgements

The Committee expressed its gratitude to the Ministers, departmental officials, representatives from NGOs and academia for attending the two-day sessions and providing input on this vital issue of child protection in the Western Cape.