

BIOGRAPHY: INGRID LESTRADE

I am a forty-year-old female and currently hold an LLB qualification. I am now at an advanced stage of completing my LLM degree with a specialization in tax law. During February 2019, I was admitted and enrolled as an attorney of the High Court of South Africa, and I am currently engaged in practice as such. I am a bronze medallist in the 2016 Commonwealth Judo Games and four times South African Judo champion. I teach 47 rural farm children Judo to help them feel safe, motivated to stay in school, improve their school marks and inspire their parents to drink more responsibly.

I grew up in Piketberg, which is a small rural town on the West Coast of the Western Cape. During my formative years, being raised by a single mother, alongside my three sisters, I experienced first-hand the devastating effects of the apartheid system and the long-lasting and far-reaching impact of rural underdevelopment. Though faced with very challenging circumstances, I determined not to become a statistic of early pregnancy, substance abuse, intimate partner violence, poverty, unemployment and the ongoing cycle of hopelessness. I furthermore strive to improve my circumstances, that of my immediate family and the community through education and other programmes.

Immediately after completing high school, I enrolled in tertiary studies at the University of Stellenbosch. After a period of one year, I had to abandon my studies due to a lack of funds. I returned to Piketberg, where my mother was operating a Paralegal Advice Office voluntarily. I joined her in assisting in providing advice to members of the impoverished community. At the time the organization Lawyers for Human Rights commenced with plans for the setting up of a law clinic on the West Coast, and we regularly interacted with their staff.

The law clinic based in Malmesbury employed me on a full-time basis during the year 2000. I simultaneously commenced with part-time work at Goedgedacht Trust, where it became clear to me that it is possible to break the cycle of underdevelopment as a nation. When we provide focused interventions to children, particularly those originating from poor communities, we can address underdevelopment as a nation. I experienced tremendous development during my time at Lawyers for Human Rights, having risen through the ranks to occupy the management echelon within a period of two years. I simultaneously commenced studies towards my LLB degree.

During June 2002, I commenced with working for the Goedgedacht Trust on a full-time basis. I served this organization until February 2017 in various capacities, having in due course held the positions of Co-Director of the Goedgedacht Trust and Director for the Path out of Poverty Programme simultaneously. Given my significant tenure at the Goedgedacht Trust and the substantial growth which occurred within its various programmes during my time there, I articulate briefly the purpose and growth trajectory of the programme as well as my involvement in its numerous aspects. The Path out of Poverty Programme (POP in short) started to help address the boredom of rural teenagers on farms. I developed, fundraised, implemented and replicated the POP programme to touched the lives of more than 12 000 rural children and youth in more than 16 different rural communities in the Western Cape Province. The long-

term (twenty-five-year programme), integrated, holistic and sustainable youth development model gained national and international interest from various universities like Princeton, Stanford and Oxford universities, the World Health Organisation, famous actors like Billy Nighy, Eddi Izzardt and Helen George and hosted well-known schools like Eton College and Marlborough College. Over the years, my role developed from implementing to overseeing the activities of more than 115 staff members who worked in 8 different youth centres across the Western Cape Province.

During 2005, I was privileged to be appointed by then Premier Ebrahim Rasool as a Youth Commissioner for the Western Cape Province, a position which I occupied on a part-time basis until 2007, while continuing my employment at Goedgedacht Trust. The Goedgedacht Trust and its various programmes having been achieved sustainability under my watch, I vacated my post at this project at the end of February 2017. This project remains a viable undertaking having a significant impact in breaking the rural cycle of poverty and in particular accompanying children in a manner which maximizes their potential, enabling them to become responsible citizens despite prevailing negative environmental factors.

During March 2017, I assumed my current role as Director at Middelpoos Farm and established Inspire Children and Youth Non-Profit Organisation. The government bought Middelpoos farm in 2012 to help 13 farm families use the resources on this farm to break a generational cycle of poverty. I assist the farm families to incubate, develop and implement a sustainable model for an alternative rural economy on to help their children have the fundamentals that they need to break the cycle of poverty as they experience it on farms. My main work is to develop strategy, fundraise, implement and market the activities geared towards rural children, youth and women on Middelpoos and surrounding farms that focus on education, health and economic development. The impact has been that 47 rural farm children and youth have competed at national and international for JUDO. The very impoverished children with nearly no resources improved their school retention and school performance. Children from as young as five years grow food to feed themselves and 32 vulnerable women daily, 65 farm families on ten farms weekly and to sell to help raise money for their Judo project. The children have inspired their mothers to drink more responsibly and attend work regularly.

My vision is to create safe spaces, provide positive stimulation and find creative ways to nurture more children to become INSPIREpreneurs who dream, inspire and create a better future for all children in the Western Cape Province.