

BIOGRAPHY OF MS LIZELLE BONITA AFRICA

I am a 44 year-old female with extensive experience in working with children and dealing with issues relating to children, directly or indirectly. In my professional capacity, I have dealt with children, *inter alia*, as a prosecutor in sexual offences where children were victims thereof. My skills extend to having the ability to communicate, relate to these victims and effectively assess and address their needs when dealing with them at court. The age group of these children varied from 6 till 18 years of age and I prosecuted these matters for a period of approximately 9 years.

Thereafter, I became involved in the management of the Thuthuzela Care Centres (**TCCs**). Through this management I was able to assist with the co-ordination of services of local and provincial stakeholders to ensure efficiency and efficacy of these services. These centres accommodate children and adult victims of sexual and gender based violence. I also assisted with the establishment of the remainder of the TCCs which fulfils the same function for more child victims across the province.

During the course of my professional career, I have worked and partnered with a number of non-governmental organisations (**NGOs**) and government stakeholders. I have assisted with training for a number of these NGOs regarding relevant legislation pertaining to sexual and gender based violence in order to improve services for children, both within the criminal justice system and psycho social services. I have also assisted provincial government departments, *inter alia*, the Department of Social Development, the South African Police Service (**SAPS**) [*Family Violence Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit*], Department of Health, Western Cape Education Department and their Employee Relations section.

I provided training to the officials of the abovementioned departments on sexual offences legislation, court process, expert witness and social context training, *inter alia*, to improve services to all child victims and adults. I am a co-chairperson with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development of the Child Justice and Gender Justice forums and LGBTI provincial task team. I have actively participated in these forums since 2008. The abovementioned Child Justice forum is a monitoring body that oversees how child offenders are managed in relation to the Child Justice Act within the criminal justice system. As part of my responsibilities in relation to child offenders, I am part of the diversion accreditation committee chaired by the Department of Social Development. This body is responsible for accrediting suitable diversion services and the organisations that provide these services to child offenders in conflict with the law.

I have also assisted the Western Cape Education Department with their "*Abuse No More*" protocol document for all relevant persons within that department. I have contributed to a number of legislative developments throughout my career. As part of the National Prosecuting Authority (**NPA**) of South Africa I am involved in the

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national training task team for sexual offences where I have assisted with the developments of the curriculum, annual revision thereof and the provision of this training for prosecutors. Part of this training is to capacitate prosecutors to deal with child victims and how to communicate effectively with them. I have also played a role in the Presidents Emergency Response Action Plan for sexual and gender based violence which will improve service delivery within the criminal justice system for child and adult victims.

In my personal capacity, I am a mother of five children ranging from ages 5,8,12,16 and 19 years of age. Apart from my personal experiences with my own children, I have always been involved with children at church, either in relation to children's church responsibilities and the arts, where I taught dance and organised themed productions where children were involved. I have done this at various stages since 2004 till 2016. I have been able to encounter children of all ages and various backgrounds in a more personal and social setting through these interactions. I believe that through my vast experience, as detailed *supra*, and my skill set that I learnt in my professional and personal capacity, that I have been groomed and prepared for the role as the Western Cape Commissioner for Children. I am able to lead and co-ordinate relevant stakeholders and organisations and drive processes towards its intended outcome. Given the wealth of experience I have garnered, I am able to champion children's rights and issues relating thereto and pioneer change which is called for in this position.

In conclusion, I am therefore able to give effect to the legislative prescripts for this position for children who are victims, child offenders and children who fall prey to socio economic circumstances and other ills.