

My legal career and children

Magistrate in Children's and Maintenance Court

I have been a Family Court magistrate since 2014. My Children's Court work involves collaborating with provincial and national stakeholders to protect children and ensure that their rights are enforced. My training in Restorative Practices has equipped me to engage with the children and create a space for their voice to be heard. As a result, I have an acute insight into the plight of children, who are in need of care and protection because of abuse, addiction or neglect. I meet these children and their families every day. My perception is that their problems are exacerbated by substance abuse challenges and the socio-economic conditions under which they live.

'for the children's sake' Mediation Project

Since 2012 I organized a team of volunteer mediators who serve the Children's and Maintenance court by resolving conflict between parents engaged in litigation. This project was recognized by the Hague Institute for Innovating Law <https://www.hiil.org/> in 2019, and awarded funding to scale the model into other courts. I have called this project 'for the children's sake'. When mediators shift the emphasis to the needs of the children, it often results in a successful settlement of the conflict.

Child Friendly Courtroom

I have endeavored to create a child friendly experience at court. I have made a section of my court look and feel like a play area. I also allow children who appear in my court to choose a take home toy and to this end I have garnered a seemingly never-ending stream of donations.

Child Justice Court

I worked as a prosecutor in the criminal, Maintenance and Child Justice Court from 2010. I did my own research in the Child Justice Court which revealed that 90% of the teenagers appearing in court were not attending school. Exclusion from school exacerbates the long-term social problem and a better way to address this is through Restorative Practices. I include a video clip explaining how Restorative Practices work in schools. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HatSl1lu_PM I initiated a Child Justice Forum in Hout Bay to introduce these practices and was called to serve as a magistrate soon thereafter.

Maintenance Court

My experience in the Maintenance Court sensitized me to the impact of non-payment of maintenance on children and I fought hard as a prosecutor to combat this, all the while using a restorative justice approach. I have continued this fight in my role as a magistrate and have helped hundreds of women get monetary relief by issuing maintenance and attachment orders.

<https://www.southernmail.co.za/news/victory-in-battle-for-maintenance-arrears-16224821>

Community work and children

Early motherhood

After practicing law for 5 years in the 1980's, I resigned to start a family and immersed myself in the work of the church, school and community in Hout Bay where my husband serves as a pastor.

Mother Support Groups

After the birth of my first child I started a mother's support group, which entailed meeting with other women and their babies to talk and share our struggles. This idea caught on and soon there were multiple support groups in our community.

Daycare for Disabled Children

I started a support group for mothers of children with disabilities in Imizamo Yethu, which developed into a daycare facility. I had no funding and so persuaded the church school to loan us part of their facilities. The operation was run by volunteers assisted by church mothers who set up a roster to provide daily home cooked meals for the children. We called our project Noluthando Day Care and eventually procured premises from government which enabled us to hand the project over to the community. Noluthando still exists but is no longer exclusively for children with disabilities.

Ambleside School of Hout Bay

In 1990 I started corresponding with the author of a book called "For the Children's Sake" and she invited me to an educational conference in 1999. On my return I ran workshops to train teachers and parents in this method. This culminated in the school affiliating with Ambleside Schools International. <https://www.amblesideschools.com/> I served on the school board for many years and volunteered as acting principal during times of crisis at the school. I also served as a Director on the Ambleside Schools in Southern Africa Board from 2016 and resigned in 2019.

One child at a time Trust

I initiated a bursary scheme for parents who could not afford fees and formed a Trust called 'one child at a time' to raise funds for disadvantaged families. <https://www.amblesideschool.co.za/about-us/social-upliftment>

Children's Church

I served as a teacher in the children's ministry of the church and joined up with a team to write and teach a curriculum for the Children's Ministry called 'The Big Picture for Little People'.

<http://kingscrosstraining.com/shop/childrens-curriculums/the-big-picture-for-little-people-set/>

My Purpose

My life journey expresses my passion and purpose to work always and only, 'for the children's sake'.